

THE
NEW TESTAMENT
OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,
WITH A
COMMENTARY,

CONSISTING OF SHORT LECTURES FOR THE DAILY USE OF FAMILIES.

BY THE
REV. CHARLES GIRDLESTONE, M.A.
VICAR OF



SEDGLEY, STAFFORDSHIRE.

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L O N D O N :
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TO HER MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY
THE QUEEN
THIS EDITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST
WITH A COMMENTARY
IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN ENDEAVOURED
TO ENFORCE THE GENUINE DUTIES OF THE GOSPEL
BY THE FAITHFUL EXPOSITION OF ITS DOCTRINES
ON A PLAN ADAPTED TO THE DAILY USE OF FAMILIES
IS BY HER MAJESTY'S GRACIOUS PERMISSION
MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
AS TO ONE WHO ADORNS HER EXALTED STATION
WITH CORRESPONDING EMINENCE
IN THE VIRTUES OF DOMESTIC LIFE
BY HER MAJESTY'S
MOST HUMBLE AND TRULY OBLIGED SERVANT
CHARLES GIRDLESTONE

P R E F A C E.

THIS work is designed to furnish a Commentary on the Scriptures of the New Testament, at once explanatory, practical, and devotional. The arrangement is especially adapted for that reading of the Bible in families which is growing daily into more common use. The style and matter have been made as near, as the author was able, to such plain and profitable exposition, as any competent master of a family might be conceived likely to draw up, or deliver, of his own. And as most families comprise parent and child, master and servant, regard has been paid to the capacities and wants of each class of hearers or readers. These conditions have necessarily excluded all length of argument, all extent of disquisition, all statement and refutation of objections, all painful discussion of controverted opinions. But within these limits there seems to remain ample room for setting forth the main drift of the inspired text, and for enforcing the more important doctrines, and duties, which it may be plainly shewn to contain. And for such use as is here chiefly intended, it may be thought, with some reason, that a commentary is the better, in proportion as it presents less show of learning, requires less labour of attention, and contains less matter of doubtful speculation. Whilst the commentator, exempt from the necessity of proving, and refuting, and disputing, may venture, in humble imitation of a Divine example, to teach “as one having authority.”

According to this design the work has been arranged in distinct consecutive lectures. To these are prefixed the words of Scripture, divided into paragraphs, and so printed in the same page with the lecture, that the reader may have under his eye both text and commentary at once. Whilst the length of the two taken together is proportioned to such leisure, and attention, as may commonly be expected in an assembled family. Thus each reading is a kind of short sermon, with a long text. To the text is prefixed a heading, specifying the contents of each section; and there is another to the lecture, which expresses the chief practical application, or sometimes, where there are several, the last. The lectures consist

partly of explanation, and partly of practical improvement ; and there is added, occasionally, at the end, a short ejaculation, when the subject seems most properly to suggest the spirit of prayer. The explanation is in the form of paraphrase or remark, according as either might best serve to make clear the meaning of the passage. And the practical reflections, though sometimes kept separate for the end, are in general interwoven throughout the body of the commentary. For there is nothing which the author has so greatly had at heart, and no principle which he has designed so stedfastly to observe, in the progress of the work, as to derive, either directly or indirectly, from each single passage of the word of God, some useful lesson of a more heavenly mind, or of a more holy life.

On this principle it seems desirable, in passages which refer properly to occasions now no more, after noting their primary application, to accommodate the expressions, as profitably as we may, to any similar circumstances in which we are placed ourselves. And in this sense, and with this view, there has been adopted in this commentary what has been called often, though improperly, a figurative interpretation. But in no case has it been intended to represent as figurative any expression in the text, which does not obviously there purport so to be ; the very hardest sayings of divine revelation, if spoken without figure, being evidently as much entitled as the easiest to our devout and literal obedience. In passages, which, owing to the imperfection of language, appear to be ambiguous in the original, that sense, which has been adopted as the best, is commented on as if it were the only one. And the same method has been followed in those verses, of rare occurrence, which admit of a more accurate translation, than that which we find in our excellent version. The parallel passages, which form, when duly used, the best of commentaries, are largely quoted in the body of the lectures. Those of the Psalms are taken purposely from the version used in our prayer books, as being the one which would most readily suggest itself to the memory. No reference is made by figure to the verses of the text which are quoted in the exposition ; these being at the time under the reader's eye, or fresh on the hearer's ear. The words however of the Scripture are not unfrequently repeated, with a view to shew the connexion of the whole passage that is explained. And this method will be found also to be an excellent safeguard against a practice most fruitful of religious error, the explaining of detached texts in senses inconsistent with their context.

In point of doctrine, the author would wish explicitly to state, how far his work is adapted for the use of Christians, of what are commonly called all denominations. He has endeavoured to write, as he desires to live, in the sound faith of that church, in which he has been entrusted

with the office of a minister. And he cannot therefore pretend to be indifferent, either to the great essentials of Christian truth, or to those trifling points of variance, most grievously dividing our Christian community, which in proportion as they are trifling, fix so much the more fearfully, on the one party or the other, the unquestionable sin of schism. At the same time he has carefully abstained from all such vain or virulent theological disputings as are justly considered to be the bane of our common Gospel. He conceives that the matters on which most Christians are agreed, are many more, and far more worthy of daily meditation, than those on which they are unhappily estranged from each other. And he trusts, that there will be found, in these pages, no more frequent reference to the distinctive tenets of his own church, than will commend itself for its faithfulness, if not for its truth, to "every man's conscience."

In that part of this undertaking which concerns the four Gospels, particular attention has been paid to the harmony of the sacred history. Not that any discussion has been introduced, on a subject of such deep and laborious research; but that no fact is treated of as having taken place in any other order, than that in which, after due comparison, it has been thought most likely to have happened. A similar correspondence has been attempted in the construction of the Lectures. Next to making them each appropriate to the text they comment on, it has been a main object to impart to them an agreement and connexion with each other. Those passages which occur once only, and in one Gospel, are explained at once so much the more at length. And where the facts or the discourses, the doctrines or the duties, are repeated, there is usually some variation in the circumstances, which affords also a variety in the exposition. Where the narratives are found to be identical, different parts of it are brought forward for exposition, on the different occasions; or on one, the general tenour of the passage is considered, on another it is explained in detail.

And yet no very anxious pains have professedly been taken, that under similar passages of Scripture no similar notions should recur in the comment. For first it must be remembered, that the work is prepared with a view to that family reading of the Scriptures, wherein only one, or at the most two Lectures, would be read in each single day. And there would thus often be an interval of weeks and months between the occurrence of the like reflections; which to a reader, perusing the whole continuously, might seem else to be too frequently repeated. And further, the repetition of the same matter in the Gospels, is a proof that there are some things in our religion, of which, for their difficulty or importance, we need more often in proportion to be put in remembrance. And it must needs be regretted, by the devout reader,

that we have not more and more Gospels to inform us of the works and words of Jesus ; more, and more frequently repeated, admonitions of the truths we are most bound to believe and practise. And if the commentator, in like manner, should occasionally repeat the maxims of practical improvement, it is not because repetition is difficult to avoid, but because he is himself unwilling to avoid it. He has ample choice of variety, in the multitude of profitable thoughts, which the sacred writings are calculated to suggest. But in his concern for those whom he designs to edify, he is desirous to renew those words of exhortation, which according to times and circumstances seem best suited to awaken the slothful, to revive the careless, to strengthen the weak, or to confirm the strong.

That such may be, in any degree, the fruit of this undertaking, is the prayer with which the writer desires humbly to conclude this portion of his work : that God may of his mercy, bless all efforts made by man to set forth and enforce his holy word ; that they who teach may speak or write with reverence and love ; and that they who read, or hear, may receive into their hearts that good seed which springeth up unto everlasting life. Amen.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THIS EDITION.

THIS edition of a work which has been previously published in another shape, has been undertaken for the purpose of exonerating the late Churchwardens of the Parish of Sedgley; whose situation is as follows:

The late Churchwardens of the parish of Sedgley incurred a large expense, by order of several Vestry Meetings, in fencing and furnishing two new Churches. A Church Rate of two shillings and sixpence in the pound was granted in the year 1832, for the final payment of the whole charge. Doubts having been raised about the legality of the rate, and a Caveat lodged against it, the Churchwardens have been unable to collect more than about one half of the amount. And there being now no means of obtaining any legal rate for expenses long since incurred, they remain personally liable to the amount of about a Thousand Pounds. The Vicar of the Parish, having been Chairman of the several Vestry Meetings in which the expenses were ordered, being persuaded that they were no more than necessary for fencing and furnishing the two Churches, and finding no other means of saving the Wardens from a heavy loss, which he feels that he in some measure induced them to incur, has attempted to supply the deficiency, by devoting to that object the profits of this publication.

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47. The time and place and manner of hearing.
48. The blessing of knowing and believing in Christ.
49. The bounty of the heavenly sower.
50. The growth and wide influence of a holy life.
51. That God permits evil in order to greater good.
52. How much we must both sacrifice and do for Christ's sake.
53. The danger of familiarity with things sacred.
54. That the progress of sin is rapid.
55. How God filleth the hungry with good things.
56. That our safety through God's mercy depends upon our faith.
57. That no one duty may be pleaded for the neglect of any other.
58. That we should be clean before God in our hearts.
59. That we should pray with faith through Christ.
60. We should persevere in doing good.
61. That we need not more signs, but more inclination to believe.
62. By what rule we shall be bound or loosed hereafter.
63. The value of the soul.
64. That the glory of heaven is not far from every one of us.
65. That faith is most effectual to success in the Christian life.
66. The rule of Christian payment.
67. The pattern of Christian humility.
68. Church discipline and church unity.
69. That we should forgive as we have been forgiven.
70. How we must deny ourselves in all things for Christ's sake.
71. How we may fulfil the law of God.
72. Reasons for contentment and self denial.
73. How the last shall be first, and the first last.
74. The doctrine of the atonement.
75. That through faith we see, and through Christ have faith.
76. How we may best shew forth our own praise of Christ.
77. That we should pray in faith, nothing doubting.
78. How we may duly estimate our obedience or our sins.
79. How we should render unto God the fruits of holiness.
80. How this parable applies to them that are Christians.
81. That our duty to the government is a part of our duty to God.
82. Life and immortality brought to light through the gospel.
83. That no one commandment can do away with the rest.
84. The rule of Christian precedency.

S. MATTHEW ch. 23—28.

- 23. 13. Christ denounceth woe against hypocrites.
- 23. 23. Christ further denounceth woe.
- 23. 34. Christ prophesieth the desolation of Jerusalem.
- 24. 1. Christ prophesieth the destruction of the temple.
- 24. 15. Christ warneth his disciples when to flee from Jerusalem.
- 24. 29. Christ prophesieth of his coming to judge the world.
- 24. 42. The good man of the house and the servants.
- 25. 1 The parable of the ten virgins.
- 25. 14 The first part of the parable of the talents.
- 25. 24 The parable of the talents concluded.
- 25. 31 Christ declareth who shall be blessed of the Father.
- 25. 41. Christ declareth who shall be hereafter cursed.
- 26. 1. The rulers conspire against Christ. A woman anointeth Him.
- 26. 14. Christ eateth the passover with his disciples.
- 26. 26. Christ warneth Peter.
- 26. 36. Christ prayeth in agony at Gethsemane.
- 26. 47. Christ is betrayed by Judas the Jews.
- 26. 57. Christ is led away by Caiaphas, Peter following.
- 26. 69. Christ is thrice denied of Peter.
- 27. 1 Christ is delivered bound to Pilate. Judas hangeth himself.
- 27. 11 Christ standeth before the governor. Pilate washeth his hands.
- 27. 26 Christ is delivered to be crucified.
- 27. 35 Christ is crucified.
- 27. 45 Christ yieldeth up the ghost.
- 27. 55 Christ is buried : and the sepulchre sealed.
- 28. 1 Christ is risen, and appeareth to the women.
- 28. 11 Christ appeareth to the disciples, and sendeth them to baptize.

S. MARK ch. 1—5.

The title.

- 1. 1. John the Baptist, his office. He baptizeth Christ.
- 1. 14. Christ beginneth to preach, and to call his apostles.
- 1. 7. Christ healeth Simon's wife's mother ; prayeth in private.
- 1. 36. Christ preacheth in Galilee, cleanseth a leper.
- 2. 1. Christ healeth one sick of the palsy.
- 2. 18. Christ calleth Levi, eateth with publicans and sinners.
- 2. 23. Christ teacheth that the sabbath was made for man.
- 3. 1. Christ healeth the withered hand.
- 3. 13. Christ ordaineth his twelve apostles.
- 3. 22. Christ speaketh of blasphemy ; declareth who are his relatives.
- 4. 1. Christ speaketh the parable of the sower.
- 4. 10. Christ expoundeth the parable of the sower.
- 4. 21. The parables of the candle, the seed, and the mustard tree.
- 4. 35. Christ stilleth the raging of the sea.
- 5. 1. Christ casteth out the legion of devils.
- 5. 10. The evil spirits enter into the swine.
- 5. 21. Christ healeth the woman of the bloody issue.

LECTURE 85—111.

- 85. How Christians are in danger of the like hypocrisy.
- 86. That these woes belong to the like sins in Christians.
- 87. That we must receive with joy the tidings of salvation.
- 88. What encouragement we have to endure unto the end.
- 89. That we should flee from sin, to escape the wrath to come.
- 90. That the last judgment is sure, and will be soon and sudden.
- 91. That we should be ever on the watch for death and judgment.
- 92. How we may have oil in our lamps.
- 93. That our improvement must bear proportion to grace received.
- 94. That to be slothful is to be wicked.
- 95. That we should do all things as doing them unto Christ.
- 96. That we should love each other for Christ's sake and not for our own.
- 97. That we cannot spend too much in the honouring of Christ.
- 98. That in the worst of sins we should distrust ourselves.
- 99. That pride goeth before a fall.
- 100. How to behave and how to pray when in affliction.
- 101. That in our afflictions the Scriptures are fulfilled.
- 102. That we should follow close to Jesus at all risks.
- 103. That we should never be ashamed of Christ and his Gospel.
- 104. The parts of true repentance, ; its difficulty and necessity.
- 105. How the prayer of the swearer is fulfilled.
- 106. That it is good for us to be afflicted.
- 107. Faith in Christ crucified.
- 108. That we should hold the truth not in fear but in love.
- 109. That our bodies must see corruption.
- 110. How we may have joy in the presence of our Lord.
- 111. The essentials of Christian faith, and of Christian practice.

LECTURE 112—129.

- 112. Use of having four Gospels.
- 113. That God is for Christ's sake well pleased in his sons.
- 114. That we may not set up our own will against God's.
- 115. The duty and manner of private prayer.
- 116. How we ought to publish God's goodness to ourselves.
- 117. That we should desire rather spiritual than earthly blessings.
- 118. The limit of Christian festivity.
- 119. How we may best profit by the Christian sabbath.
- 120. How we are to disarm the enmity of the world.
- 121. How we ought to attend the ministry of the word.
- 122. That we should draw near to Christ by zeal in his service.
- 123. A Christian view of our natural advantages.
- 124. The responsibility of our Christian privileges.
- 125. The gentle growth and sovereign power of divine grace.
- 126. That the terrors of the Lord are revealed for our good.
- 127. That we live in a world of spirits.
- 128. How we should endeavour to promote the faith of others.
- 129. It is through Christ that faith maketh whole.

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5. 35. Christ raiseth from the dead the daughter of Jairus.
6. 1. Christ is contemned of his countrymen.
6. 14. Herod puts John the Baptist to death.
6. 30. Christ feedeth five thousand with five loaves and two fishes.
6. 45. Christ walketh on the sea of Galilee.
7. 1. Christ reproveth the Pharisees for finding fault with the disciples.
7. 14. Christ teacheth what things defile the man.
7. 24. Christ complieth with the prayer of a Syrophenician woman.
7. 31. Christ healeth one that was deaf and dumb.
8. 1. Christ feedeth four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes.
8. 10. Christ refuseth a sign to the Pharisees, denouncing their leaven.
8. 22. Christ giveth a blind man his sight.
8. 27. Christ acknowledgeth his title; exhorteth to self denial.
9. 1. Christ is transfigured on a high mountain.
9. 14. Christ casteth out a dumb spirit.
9. 30. Christ foresheweth his death; teacheth meekness and humility.
9. 38. Christ speaketh of offences and of hell fire.
10. 1. Christ answereth the Pharisees on divorcement.
10. 17. Christ answereth one inquiring of the way of life.
10. 28. Christ on the way to Jerusalem.
10. 35. Christ answereth James and John.
10. 46. Christ giveth sight to blind Bartimæus.
11. 1. Christ rideth in triumph into Jerusalem.
11. 12. Christ maketh the fig tree wither, cleanseth the temple.
11. 27. Christ asketh of the scribes one question.
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12. 13. Christ answereth on the lawfulness of tribute.
12. 18. Christ convinceth the Sadducees.
12. 28. Christ answereth one of the scribes.
12. 35. Christ refuteth the scribes, and commendeth the widow's mite.
13. 1. Christ prophesieth the destruction of the temple.
13. 14. Christ admonisheth the disciples how to act in their troubles.
13. 24. Christ telleth of his second coming, commandeth to watch.
14. 1. Christ is anointed by a woman, is betrayed by Judas.
14. 12. Christ eateth the passover, and ordaineth his supper.
14. 26. Christ prayeth in Gethsemane.
14. 43. Christ is taken; is forsaken by the disciples.
14. 53. Christ is condemned by the council of the Jews.
14. 66. Christ is thrice denied of Peter.
15. 1. Christ is brought bound, and accused unto Pilate.
15. 15. Christ is mocked, and also crucified with two thieves.
15. 29. Christ on the cross giveth up the ghost.
15. 39. Christ is buried by Joseph of Arimathea.

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133. That we never lose by hearing and obeying the Gospel.
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149. That there is no safety in ignorance of danger.
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153. That we should pray with faith and with forgiveness.
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166. How we may follow Christ unto the end.
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2. 1. Christ is born at Bethlehem.
2. 15. Christ is circumcised.
2. 25. Simeon and Anna prophesy of Christ.
2. 39. Christ dwelleth with Joseph and Mary.
3. 1. The preaching and baptism of John.
3. 10. John testifieth of Christ.
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5. 27. Christ calleth Levi, eateth with publicans.
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6. 12. Christ chooseth his twelve apostles.
6. 20. Christ preacheth blessings and woes.
6. 27. Christ preacheth on giving, loving, and doing good.
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7. 1. Christ healeth the Centurion's servant.
7. 11. Christ raiseth the widow's son, answereth John's messengers.
7. 24. Christ speaketh to the people concerning John the Baptist.
7. 36. Christ justifieth a woman which had been a sinner.
8. 1. Christ teacheth the parable of the sower.
8. 16. Christ teacheth by parables; rebuketh the wind.
8. 26. Christ casteth out Legion.
8. 41. Christ healeth one woman, raiseth another from the dead.
9. 1. Christ sendeth out his twelve disciples.
9. 10. Christ feedeth five thousand men.
9. 18. Christ preacheth the cross, his own, and ours.
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209. The perplexity of the sinful hearer.
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213. The necessity of watchfulness against spiritual pride.
214. The nature of our journey heavenward.
215. The privilege of enjoying a Christian ministry.
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11. 1. Christ teacheth to pray.
11. 14. Christ casteth out a devil that was dumb.
11. 27. Christ denounceth an evil generation.
11. 37. Christ reproveth the Pharisees.
11. 45. Christ reproveth the lawyers.
11. 1. Christ teacheth to avoid hypocrisy.
12. 13. The foolish rich man.
12. 22. Christ teacheth how to view worldly wealth.
12. 32. Christ teacheth to watch and be ready.
12. 41. Christ teacheth to be always ready.
12. 49. Christ preacheth to the disciples and to the people.
13. 1. Christ preacheth repentance. The barren fig tree.
13. 10. Christ healeth on the sabbath; speaketh in parables.
13. 23. Christ exhorteth to strive; reproveth Herod.
14. 1. Christ healeth the dropsy; preacheth humility.
14. 12. Christ teacheth to feast the poor. The parable of the supper.
14. 25. Christ preacheth perseverance. The parable of the salt.
15. 1. The parables of the lost sheep, and the piece of silver.
15. 11. The parable of the two sons.
15. 22. The parable of the two sons concluded.
16. 1. The unjust steward.
16. 10. Christ reproveth the covetous Pharisees.
16. 19. The rich man and Lazarus.
17. 1. The master and servant.
17. 11. Christ healeth ten lepers.
17. 20. Christ teacheth of the kingdom of God.
18. 1. The unjust judge.
18. 9. The Pharisee and the Publican.
18. 18. Christ answereth the ruler touching the way of life.
18. 31. Christ foresheweth his death; healeth a blind man.
19. 1. Christ converteth Zaccheus.
19. 11. The parable of the nobleman and the pounds.
19. 28. Christ rideth into Jerusalem in triumph.
19. 41. Christ cometh to Jerusalem.
20. 1. Christ maintaineth his authority.
20. 9. The parable of the vineyard.
20. 20. Christ answereth the spies.
20. 27. Christ refuteth the Sadducees.
20. 39. Christ denounceth the scribes.
21. 1. Christ commendeth a poor widow.
21. 9. Christ foretelleth the visitation of Jerusalem.
21. 25. Christ foretelleth the last day.
22. 1. Christ is sold to the Jews.
22. 14. Christ ordaineth his holy Supper.
22. 24. Christ exhorteth to humility.
22. 35. Christ prayeth at the mount of Olives; is betrayed by Judas.
22. 49. Christ is denied by Peter.
22. 63. Christ is blasphemed; owneth to being the Son of God.
23. 1. Christ is accused before Pilate; is sent to Herod.
23. 13. Christ is delivered to the will of the Jews.
23. 27. Christ is crucified.
23. 35. Christ between two thieves on the cross; giveth up the ghost.
23. 48. Christ is buried.
24. 1. Christ's resurrection is declared by two angels.
24. 13. Christ appeareth to the disciples in the way to Emmaus.

LECTURE 218—273.

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219. Encouragement in praying.
220. That we cannot become good on bad motives.
221. That we enjoy sufficient signs.
222. That we must obey in the heart.
223. That we must not condemn our neighbours.
224. The connection of fear and falsehood.
225. How to be rich toward God.
226. Why we must not take thought for this life.
227. Further arguments against a worldly mind.
228. The danger and sin of delay.
229. How by right judgment we might avoid divisions.
230. That the impenitent sinner will be utterly destroyed.
231. That the influence of the Gospel should be progressive.
232. That to die is the being perfected.
233. That we should esteem others better than ourselves.
234. The peril of abusing things lawful.
235. How a Christian must hate, and what.
236. That God willeth not the death of a sinner.
237. The progress of conversion.
238. How we should rejoice in the conversion of a sinner.
239. The right use of worldly goods.
240. That the judgment of God differs from man's.
241. The perils of wealth.
242. That we are unprofitable servants.
243. How few are thankful.
244. How to behave when the Son of man is revealed.
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246. Humility in things spiritual.
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248. The progress of spiritual sight.
249. Almsgiving and restitution.
250. That God's ways are not our ways.
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252. Justice and mercy.
253. The misery of unbelief.
254. That we must beware of rejecting Christ.
255. The end of worldly cunning.
256. Concerning heavenly happiness.
257. That we must beware of hypocrites.
258. That our actions are estimated by our means and motives.
259. That we must not give way to fear.
260. The certainty of the judgment.
261. The duty of being prepared.
262. How kindly we are invited to the Lord's Supper.
263. Consolation to the fallen.
264. Watchfulness and prayer.
265. How we should be good to the evil.
266. That we should follow readily our own convictions.
267. What companions we ought to prefer.
268. How we should bear the cross of Christ.
269. The fruit of forgiveness.
270. The way to die a Christian death.
271. Against selfishness.
272. That we must rise again in holiness of life.
273. The necessity of divine teaching.

LUKE ch. 24.

- 24. 28. Christ is known by the disciples, in breaking of bread.
- 24. 36. Christ appeareth to the eleven at Jerusalem.
- 24. 50. Christ is carried up into heaven.

S. JOHN ch. 1—12.

The title.

- 1. 1. That the Word was God.
- 1. 6. The offices of John the Baptist and of Christ.
- 1. 15. The testimony of John.
- 1. 29. Further testimony of John concerning Christ.
- 1. 43. Christ commendeth Nathanael.
- 2. 1. Christ turneth water into wine.
- 2. 13. Christ cleanseeth the temple, foresheweth his resurrection.
- 3. 1. Christ teacheth Nicodemus.
- 3. 10. Christ telleth Nicodemus of heavenly things.
- 3. 22. Further testimony of John to Christ.
- 4. 1. Christ teacheth a woman of Samaria.
- 4. 15. Christ revealeth Himself to the woman of Samaria.
- 4. 31. Christ encourageth his disciples.
- 4. 17. Christ healeth a child sick at Capernaum.
- 5. 1. Christ healeth one at the pool of Bethesda.
- 5. 10. Christ answereth the Jews.
- 5. 24. Christ testifieth of Himself.
- 5. 31. Christ declareth the testimony of others.
- 6. 1. Christ feedeth five thousand.
- 6. 15. Christ walketh on the sea; reproveth the people.
- 6. 30. Christ declareth Himself to be the bread of life.
- 6. 41. Christ answereth the Jews who murmured at Him.
- 6. 59. Christ answereth his disciples who were offended.
- 7. 1. Christ reproveth the unbelief of his brethren.
- 7. 14. Christ teacheth in the temple.
- 7. 25. Christ teacheth before the officers who are sent to take Him.
- 7. 37. Christ teacheth in the last day of the feast.
- 8. 1. Christ delivereth the woman taken in adultery.
- 8. 12. Christ justifieth his testimony.
- 8. 21. Christ speaketh of the Father.
- 8. 31. Christ denieth the Jews to be children of Abraham.
- 8. 42. Christ is accused of having an evil spirit.
- 8. 52. Christ declareth Himself to be before Abraham.
- 9. 1. Christ giveth sight to a man that was born blind.
- 9. 13. The man that was made to see is brought before the Pharisees.
- 9. 24. The Pharisees further examine the man that had been blind.
- 9. 35. Christ reproveth the Pharisees.
- 10. 1. Christ is the door of the sheep, and the shepherd of the sheep.
- 10. 11. Christ is the good shepherd.
- 10. 19. Christ at the feast of the dedication.
- 10. 31. Christ answereth the Jews who would have stoned Him.
- 11. 1. Christ heareth of Lazarus being sick.
- 11. 11. Christ goeth to Bethany, where Lazarus is dead.
- 11. 28. Christ weepeth.
- 11. 38. Christ raiseth Lazarus.
- 11. 47. Christ's death is prophesied by Caiaphas.
- 12. 1. Christ cometh to Bethany, suppeth with Lazarus.

LECTURE 274—276.

- 274. How we should draw in others to the Lord's Supper.
- 275. How far we may not believe for joy.
- 276. How we should worship Christ.

LECTURE 277—324.

- 277. That we must have a right faith in Christ.
- 278. How there is in Christ the light of men.
- 279. How we must become sons of God.
- 280. That we must not think too highly of ourselves.
- 281. One important use of Christian names.
- 282. How we should have in us no guile.
- 283. That God keeps the best till last.
- 284. That we are the temple of Christ.
- 285. The Christian new birth.
- 286. How we ought to come to the light.
- 287. How we should allow the precedence of others.
- 288. How those who have been at variance should help each other.
- 289. That we must worship God in spirit and in truth.
- 290. That we should be patient in well doing.
- 291. How we should persevere in praying.
- 292. The healing of our spiritual infirmity.
- 293. The divinity of Christ.
- 294. The twofold resurrection.
- 295. How we should search the Scriptures.
- 296. The great effect of small means.
- 297. That we must labour for eternal life.
- 298. How belief is the gift of God.
- 299. The excellency of our spiritual life.
- 300. To whom should we go, if not to Christ, for true religion.
- 301. That the friendship of the world is enmity against God.
- 302. How we must judge righteous judgment.
- 303. That life is short, and death a change for the better.
- 304. How we should cleave to truth though it be unpopular.
- 305. That we must henceforth sin no more.
- 306. The connexion of doctrine and practice.
- 307. The necessity and efficacy of faith.
- 308. That Christ can make free from sin.
- 309. What it is not to see death.
- 310. The human sufferings and divine nature of Christ.
- 311. How great a marvel is conversion unto Christ.
- 312. That we must be ready to speak for each other.
- 313. The right means of conviction.
- 314. To say we see aggravates our sin.
- 315. The fruits of coming unto God through Christ.
- 316. Unity in religion.
- 317. The unity of the Father and the Son.
- 318. That we must believe in Christ as God.
- 319. That God often makes to wait, those whom He loves.
- 320. Christ the resurrection and the life.
- 321. Christian tears.
- 322. Spiritual resurrection.
- 323. That Christ died for all men.
- 324. The best of almsgiving.

S. JOHN ch. 12—21.

- 12. 12. Christ rideth upon an ass into Jerusalem.
- 12. 23. Christ is troubled in soul.
- 12. 37. Christ is not believed on by the Jews.
- 13. 1. Christ washeth the feet of his disciples.
- 13. 6. Christ cometh to wash the feet of Peter.
- 13. 18. Christ giveth the sop to Judas.
- 13. 31. Christ commandeth to love one another.
- 14. 1. Christ comforteth his disciples.
- 14. 12. Christ promiseth the Comforter.
- 14. 22. Christ leaveth peace to his disciples.
- 15. 1. Christ the true vine.
- 15. 9. Christ calleth his disciples friends.
- 15. 18. Christ is hated without a cause.
- 16. 1. Christ promiseth to send the Comforter.
- 16. 12. Christ has yet many things to say to the disciples.
- 16. 23. Christ speaketh no more in proverbs.
- 17. 1. Christ prayeth to the Father.
- 17. 11. Christ prayeth in behalf of his apostles.
- 17. 20. Christ prayeth for all believers.
- 18. 1. Christ is betrayed and taken.
- 18. 15. Christ is denied of Peter.
- 18. 28. Christ is questioned by Pilate.
- 19. 1. Christ answereth Pilate.
- 19. 12. Christ is crucified.
- 19. 23. Christ giveth up the ghost.
- 19. 31. Christ is buried.
- 20. 1. Christ not in the sepulchre.
- 20. 10. Christ appeareth to Mary.
- 20. 19. Christ appeareth to the disciples, satisfieth Thomas.
- 21. 1. Christ appeareth to his disciples fishing.
- 21. 12. Christ giveth Peter charge of his lambs.
- 21. 20. Christ answereth Peter concerning John.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES ch. 1—8.

- 1. 1. The preface to the Acts of the Apostles.
- 1. 6. The apostles witness the ascension of Christ.
- 1. 15. Matthias is numbered with the eleven apostles.
- 2. 1. The apostles filled with the Holy Ghost speak with tongues.
- 2. 14. Peter speaketh of Christ to the Jews.
- 2. 29. Peter's address concluded. Hearers pricked in their hearts.
- 2. 41. Believers had all things in common.
- 3. 1. Peter healeth a man that was lame.
- 3. 12. St. Peter exhorteth the Jews to repentance.
- 4. 1. Peter and John are cast into prison.
- 4. 13. Peter and John threatened by the rulers.
- 4. 23. The prayer and conduct of the disciples.
- 5. 1. Ananias and Sapphira fall down dead.
- 5. 12. The apostles, being imprisoned, are delivered by an angel.
- 5. 22. The apostles answer before the council.
- 5. 33. The counsel of Gamaliel.
- 6. 1. Seven men appointed to the daily ministration.
- 6. 8. Stephen doeth great wonders, is accused of blasphemy.
- 7. 1. St. Stephen beginneth his defence.
- 7. 17. St. Stephen's defence continued.
- 7. 30. The defence of St. Stephen continued further.
- 7. 41. The defence of St. Stephen draws to a close.
- 7. 51. St. Stephen is stoned.
- 8. 1. Philip preacheth Christ in Samaria. Simon is baptized.

LECTURE 325—356.

- 325. That God loveth all men.
- 326. The uses of trial.
- 327. The guilt of unbelief.
- 328. The duty of being humble minded.
- 329. That we must be washed by the blood of Christ.
- 330. What it is to betray Christ.
- 331. How love in Christians might influence unbelievers.
- 332. Jesus the way of life.
- 333. The love of Christ made manifest.
- 334. The fruit of Christian love.
- 335. That by our good works God is glorified.
- 336. That we should love as friends.
- 337. Consolations under enmity.
- 338. The offices of the Holy Ghost.
- 339. Of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.
- 340. Cheerfulness in tribulation.
- 341. The necessity of true faith.
- 342. That we must be sanctified in the world.
- 343. How we should pray to be one.
- 344. Patience in adversity.
- 345. Worldly ease.
- 346. The preference of truth.
- 347. The abuse of authority.
- 348. Vain profession.
- 349. The Scripture must be fulfilled.
- 350. That death is nigh to us.
- 351. How we ought to know the Scriptures.
- 352. Christ the Saviour of all.
- 353. That we have sufficient evidence for belief.
- 354. The evils of disunion in religion.
- 355. The blessedness of martyrdom.
- 356. The truth and fulness of the Gospel.

LECTURE 357—380.

- 357. The necessity of divine assistance.
- 358. The advantages of united prayer.
- 359. The appointment of ministers, and respect due to their office.
- 360. The communication of faith and grace.
- 361. What God hath ordained concerning us.
- 362. What we who are baptized ought to do.
- 363. How we ought to use our worldly goods.
- 364. How we should reply to them that beg.
- 365. The blessing of being turned from iniquity.
- 366. That we can be saved only through Christ.
- 367. Christian confidence.
- 368. The fruits of the Spirit.
- 369. The sin of lying to the Holy Ghost.
- 370. God knoweth how to deliver us from sin.
- 371. That we must obey God rather than men.
- 372. The sinfulness of fighting against God.
- 373. How we ought to do good and to distribute.
- 374. The glory that shall be revealed.
- 375. Of our sinfulness, and the mercy of our Saviour.
- 376. Our unwillingness to be amended.
- 377. That Christ is not far off.
- 378. That we must be at enmity with the world.
- 379. How to forgive our enemies, and to worship Christ.
- 380. That we should rejoice, and give God the glory.

THE ACTS ch. 8—25.

- 8. 14. St. Peter reproveth Simon.
- 8. 26. Philip baptizeth the Ethiopian.
- 9. 1. Saul journeying to Damascus is stricken to the earth.
- 9. 10. Saul is baptized and preacheth at Damascus.
- 9. 23. Saul is laid wait for both by the Jews and by the Grecians.
- 9. 32. St. Peter healeth Æneas; raiseth Tabitha from the dead.
- 10. 1. Cornelius seeth a vision.
- 10. 9. St. Peter seeth a vision.
- 10. 24. Cornelius rehearseth the matter to St. Peter.
- 10. 34. St. Peter preacheth Christ to Cornelius.
- 11. 1. Peter justifieth his going in to the Gentiles.
- 11. 19. Barnabas is sent to Antioch.
- 12. 1. Herod killeth James, and taketh Peter also.
- 12. 12. Peter is in safety. Herod is eaten up of worms.
- 13. 1. Paul and Barnabas are sent forth by the Holy Ghost.
- 13. 14. Paul preacheth at Antioch in Pisidia.
- 13. 26. The preaching of Paul at Antioch concluded.
- 13. 42. Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles.
- 14. 1. Paul and Barnabas fly from Iconium to Lystra.
- 14. 14. St. Paul is stoned at Lystra; returns to Antioch.
- 15. 1. The apostles and elders hold a council at Jerusalem.
- 15. 12. St. James giveth sentence in the council at Jerusalem.
- 15. 22. The apostles and elders send letters to the churches.
- 15. 32. Paul and Barnabas depart asunder.
- 16. 1. St. Paul circumeiseth Timothy; goeth to Philippi.
- 16. 14. St. Paul converteth Lydia; casteth out an evil spirit.
- 16. 25. Paul and Silas are delivered from the prison.
- 17. 1. St. Paul preacheth at Thessalonica and Berea.
- 17. 13. St. Paul is sent from Berea to Athens.
- 17. 22. St. Paul preacheth at Athens.
- 18. 1. St. Paul cometh to Corinth.
- 18. 12. St. Paul is brought before Gallio; goeth to Ephesus.
- 18. 22. St. Paul strengtheneth the disciples. Apollos preacheth.
- 19. 1. The Holy Ghost is given to the disciples at Ephesus.
- 19. 11. The exorcists are put to shame.
- 19. 28. The Ephesians are set against St. Paul by Demetrius.
- 19. 32. The tumult of the Ephesians allayed by the magistrate.
- 20. 1. St. Paul preacheth at Troas.
- 20. 13. St Paul sendeth to Ephesus for the elders of the church.
- 20. 25. St Paul concludeth his address to the elders at Miletus.
- 21. 1. St. Paul journeyeth towards Jerusalem.
- 21. 15. St. Paul cometh to Jerusalem.
- 21. 27. St. Paul is taken by the chief captain.
- 22. 1. St. Paul maketh his defence at Jerusalem.
- 22. 17. St. Paul is not suffered to finish his defence.
- 23. 1. St. Paul pleadeth his cause before the council.
- 23. 12. The conspiracy against St. Paul is reported to Lysias.
- 23. 22. Lysias sendeth St. Paul to Felix.
- 24. 1. St. Paul is accused by Tertullus.
- 24. 17. St. Paul before Felix.
- 25. 1. St. Paul is accused by the Jews before Festus.
- 25. 10. Festus telleth king Agrippa concerning Paul.
- 25. 22. Agrippa and Bernice attend to hear St. Paul.

LECTURE 381—433.

- 381. The assurance of pardon, an encouragement to repent.
- 382. That we should go on our way rejoicing.
- 383. How we may know what God would have us to do.
- 384. That when we are converted we ought to strengthen the brethren.
- 385. How we ought to profit by the day of prosperity.
- 386. That we must not despise the lowly.
- 387. How we ought to value the ministry of man.
- 388. Vain distinctions.
- 389. How we ought to esteem none common or unequal.
- 390. The importance of baptism.
- 391. Repentance unto life.
- 392. How to behave in times of general distress.
- 393. Deliverance from spiritual captivity.
- 394. Against the love of worldly distinction.
- 395. The sin of turning men away from the truth.
- 396. The Gospel addressed to the understanding.
- 397. The necessity of a right foundation.
- 398. That we must not envy one another.
- 399. Thanks for deliverance from idolatry.
- 400. Patience and joy in tribulation.
- 401. The test of Christian fellowship.
- 402. What points we ought to yield to our brethren.
- 403. How under affliction we might rejoice in consolation.
- 404. The duty of being reconciled.
- 405. The importance of a settled place for prayer.
- 406. What reflection we ought to make at the sight of prisoners.
- 407. What we must do to be saved.
- 408. That we should search the Scriptures.
- 409. The folly of always looking after news.
- 410. The judgment to come.
- 411. That we ought not to fear.
- 412. That we ought to care for all men.
- 413. That all Christians are in some sort ministers.
- 414. What we must believe of the Holy Ghost.
- 415. Good brought out of evil.
- 416. The sources of practical unbelief.
- 417. How we must appease the storm of passion.
- 418. The necessity of watchfulness in hearing.
- 419. The foundations of Christian doctrine.
- 420. That it is more blessed to give than to receive.
- 421. The use of bearing crosses patiently.
- 422. The duty of concession.
- 423. Peace in the midst of strife.
- 424. The folly of kicking against the pricks.
- 425. The effect of the Gospel on the laws of the land.
- 426. A good conscience the way to be of good cheer.
- 427. How we ought to warn the unconverted.
- 428. How we ought to suspend our judgment.
- 429. How to receive reproof.
- 430. Against abuse of opportunities.
- 431. That we may not lay complaint without proof.
- 432. Our appeal to the King of kings.
- 433. Hinderances to our profiting by hearing the word.

THE ACTS ch. 26—28.

- 26. 1. St. Paul answereth for himself before Agrippa.
- 26. 12. St. Paul relateth his conversion.
- 26. 22. St. Paul replyeth to Festus, exhorteth Agrippa.
- 27. 1. St. Paul setteth sail for Rome.
- 27. 12. The ship is overtaken by a storm.
- 27. 21. St. Paul exhorteth the ship's company.
- 27. 33. St. Paul and the rest come safe to land.
- 28. 1. St. Paul at Melita.
- 28. 11. St. Paul arriveth at Rome.
- 28. 23. St. Paul preacheth Jesus to the Jews at Rome.
- 28. 30. St. Paul for two whole years teacheth at Rome.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS ch. 1—16.

- 1. 1. St. Paul declareth to the Romans his call to be an apostle.
- 1. 8. St. Paul desireth to preach the Gospel at Rome.
- 1. 20. How the Gentiles were without excuse.
- 2. 1. The Jew also inexcusable.
- 2. 17. The privileges of the Jew contrasted with his practice.
- 3. 1. The advantage of having the oracles of God.
- 3. 19. God's method of justification in the Gospel.
- 4. 1. The Gospel doctrine foreshewn in Abraham and David.
- 4. 16. Abraham the father of them that believe.
- 5. 1. The blessedness of being justified through faith.
- 5. 12. The extent of redemption through Christ.
- 6. 1. That we may not sin for grace to abound.
- 6. 15. That we may not sin because we are under grace.
- 7. 1. Our deliverance from the Law; which howsoever is not sin.
- 7. 13. That it is not the Law which is made death to us.
- 8. 1. The believer safe from condemnation.
- 8. 14. The believer liable to sufferings.
- 8. 28. God designeth for us to be conformed to the image of his Son.
- 9. 1. St. Paul is grieved for the rejection of the Jews.
- 9. 10. The rejection of the Jews further accounted for.
- 9. 22. The reason of God's forbearance and of his mercy.
- 10. 1. The righteousness of the Law and of the Gospel compared.
- 10. 14. Both Jews and Gentiles have been by God amply called.
- 11. 1. That God has not cast away his people.
- 11. 11. The fall of the Jews made profitable to the Gentiles.
- 11. 25. The blindness of the Jews is only for a time.
- 12. 1. God's mercy must move us to serve Him.
- 12. 9. Love unfeigned.
- 13. 1. The duty of subjects to the higher powers.
- 13. 8. Love is the fulfilling of the law.
- 14. 1. Rules for right behaviour in things indifferent.
- 14. 14. Further rules for our behaviour in things indifferent.
- 15. 1. That we must receive one another, as Christ also received us.
- 15. 15. St. Paul writeth of his ministry and of his purposes.
- 15. 26. St. Paul requesteth the prayers of the brethren.
- 16. 1. The salutations of the apostle to his friends at Rome.
- 16. 17. How much we must labour for unity.

LECTURE 434—444.

- 434. How we should meet an unjust accusation.
- 435. How we might help to convert others.
- 436. That it is most reasonable to be pious.
- 437. Of our heavenward voyage.
- 438. What sacrifices we ought to make for heaven.
- 439. That God's promises bind us to his commands.
- 440. Against hoarding what is more than enough.
- 441. The attributes of God.
- 442. Good spoken against.
- 443. The source of unbelief.
- 444. The things which concern Jesus Christ.

LECTURE 445—481.

- 445. How we may apply to ourselves what is here written.
- 446. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all believers.
- 447. Against loving darkness rather than light.
- 448. That there is no respect of persons with God.
- 449. That outward practice must proceed from principle within.
- 450. The testimony of the Scriptures against sin.
- 451. Some chief uses of our being justified by faith through Christ.
- 452. The blessedness of being forgiven.
- 453. How we also ought to believe.
- 454. That we have peace and joy in believing.
- 455. That grace abounds more than sin.
- 456. That we should reckon ourselves dead to sin.
- 457. How zealously we ought to serve the Lord.
- 458. That holiness is necessary and attainable.
- 459. The conflict between the flesh and the spirit.
- 460. That we are now debtors to the Spirit.
- 461. How the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.
- 462. That nothing can separate the faithful from Christ's love.
- 463. Against selfishness in our desire for salvation.
- 464. That we must not answer against God.
- 465. It is by faith that we must follow after righteousness.
- 466. Salvation, through Christ, by faith, proclaimed to all.
- 467. How neglectful we have been in our calling of each other.
- 468. The folly of making our own terms with God.
- 469. That we should be not highminded, but fear.
- 470. That we may not judge God's ways by ours.
- 471. That we must think soberly of ourselves.
- 472. Evil overcome with good.
- 473. That we must be subject for conscience sake.
- 474. That it is high time to prepare for judgment.
- 475. That the weak must not judge the strong.
- 476. That the strong must not scandalize the weak.
- 477. How we ought to please our neighbour for his good.
- 478. How we ought to hope of ourselves, and give God the glory.
- 479. How we ought to pray for earthly blessings.
- 480. That we ought to love some more than others, and whom.
- 481. Glory to God through Jesus Christ.

ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS 1—16.

1. 1. St. Paul saluteth the church at Corinth and all Christians.
1. 4. St. Paul giveth thanks for the Corinthians, exhorteth to unity.
1. 18. The apostle preacheth Christ crucified.
2. 1. The apostle further describeth his preaching.
3. 1. That our progress must be gradual.
3. 12. That we are the temple of the Holy Ghost.
4. 1. The just view of the office of a minister.
4. 8. The example of the apostles.
5. 1. Primitive discipline.
6. 1. Against going to law before unbelievers.
6. 12. Against the sins of uncleanness.
7. 1. Of marriage.
7. 17. Let each abide in his own calling.
7. 32. St. Paul would have us without carefulness.
8. 1. Of eating meat offered to idols, or in the idol's temple.
9. 1. St. Paul answereth them that examine him.
9. 15. The apostle hath not used his power.
10. 1. The case of the Jews an ensample to us.
10. 16. Against partaking of idol sacrifices.
11. 1. Women in the congregation must have the head covered.
11. 16. The Corinthians came together for the worse.
11. 23. St. Paul's account of the Lord's supper.
12. 1. The manifestation of the Spirit.
12. 15. We are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
13. 1. That no gifts without charity prosper.
14. 1. The gift of tongues and that of prophecy compared.
14. 11. The gift of tongues and that of prophecy further compared.
14. 26. That God is not the God of confusion, but of peace.
15. 1. The Gospel which St. Paul preached.
15. 12. The resurrection of the dead proved.
15. 29. The resurrection of the dead further proved.
15. 35. How the dead are to be raised up, and with what body.
15. 50. The change that must take place at our resurrection.
16. 1. Collection for the saints, and St. Paul's coming.
16. 13. Faithfulness and charity.

ST. PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS
ch. 1—8.

1. 1. St. Paul giveth thanks.
1. 12. St. Paul accounteth for his change of plan.
2. 1. The exercise of mercy in discipline.
2. 12. St. Paul always made to triumph in Christ.
3. 1. St. Paul appealeth to the Corinthians as his epistle.
3. 7. The Old Testament and the New compared.
4. 1. St. Paul justifieth his ministry.
4. 8. The trials and support of the apostle.
5. 1. How we groan whilst in the body.
5. 11. The minister of reconciliation.
6. 1. St. Paul's ministry and privations.
6. 11. Against fellowship with unbelievers.
7. 1. St. Paul comforted by the report of Titus.
7. 9. St. Paul's joy in the repentance of the Corinthians.
8. 1. St. Paul exhorteth to a contribution.

LECTURE 482—516.

482. The universal obligation of this Epistle.
483. Against divisions in things spiritual.
484. Wisdom of the world opposed to the preaching of the cross.
485. That we must be led by the Spirit.
486. The only foundation.
487. Rules for not defiling the temple of God.
488. That we have nothing which we have not received.
489. Candour and humility.
490. How we may discipline ourselves.
491. How we ought to avoid lawsuits.
492. The honour due unto the body.
493. Directions to the married.
494. The inward change.
495. The authority of parents in the marriage of their children.
496. The extent of our Christian liberty, and the limits of its use.
497. The provision for the ministry.
498. How we ought to run our Christian race.
499. What security we have of God.
500. That we must do all for the glory of God.
501. How far we ought to defer to custom.
502. Improvement arising from the sins of the churches.
503. That we must prepare, and also communicate.
504. Of the gifts of grace.
505. That there should be no schism in the body.
506. The excellency and durability of love.
507. We ought to prefer that which is most edifying.
508. The excellency of Christian preaching.
509. All things in the church must be done in order.
510. The death and resurrection of Christ.
511. Christ risen the first fruits of the dead.
512. The love of the world at variance with the hope of glory.
513. That we shall be raised up in the likeness of Christ.
514. The triumph over sin and death.
515. How to plan, and to express our planning for the future.
516. Dissensions and dissenters.

LECTURE 517—531.

517. Comfort in tribulation.
518. Of trust in the promises of God.
519. How we ought to forgive offenders.
520. God's glory not hindered by man's perversity.
521. How we ought to magnify the grace of God.
522. Our free access to the glory of the Gospel.
523. The faithful minister.
524. Our Christian warfare and reward.
525. The judgment seat of Christ.
526. The terms of peace.
527. How to approve ourselves in all things.
528. With whom we must agree, and with whom not.
529. Comfort in tribulation.
530. Repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.
531. Motives and rules for almsgiving.

2 CORINTHIANS ch. 8—13.

8. 13. St. Paul provideth for honest things in the sight of men.
9. 1. Touching the ministering to the saints.
9. 8. Further motives to almsgiving.
10. 1. Of the apostolical authority.
10. 13. St. Paul boasteth not beyond his measure.
11. 1. St. Paul is forced to commend himself.
11. 10. St. Paul is resolved to glory.
11. 23. The labours, and perils, and sufferings of St. Paul.
12. 1. St. Paul cometh to visions.
12. 11. St. Paul concludeth his defence of himself.
13. 1. St. Paul declareth that he will not spare.
13. 11. St. Paul sendeth his blessing to all.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS ch. 1—6.

1. 1. St. Paul reproveth the Galatians.
1. 13. St. Paul declareth his own apostleship.
2. 1. St. Paul went up again to Jerusalem.
2. 11. We are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ.
3. 1. The blessing of faithful Abraham.
3. 13. The Law is consistent with the promises of God.
4. 1. Our adoption to be sons.
4. 17. The two covenants compared.
5. 1. St. Paul exhorteth to stedfastness.
5. 16. That we must walk in the Spirit, not after the flesh.
6. 1. The concluding exhortations.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS ch. 1—6.

1. 1. St. Paul blesseth God for the election of his people.
1. 15. St. Paul prays for the Ephesians.
2. 1. How the dead in sins are quickened in Christ.
2. 11. How Christ reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God.
3. 1. The eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus.
3. 14. St. Paul bows his knees unto God in our behalf.
4. 1. St. Paul exhorts to unity.
4. 17. That we must put off the old man, and put on the new.
5. 1. That we must walk in love, not in uncleanness.
5. 17. Against drunkenness. Duties of husbands and wives.
6. 1. Duties of children, parents, servants, and masters.
6. 10. Christian armour against spiritual enemies.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS ch. 1—4.

1. 1. St. Paul writeth of his thankfulness and prayers in his bonds.
1. 19. St. Paul trusteth that he shall glorify Christ.
2. 1. St. Paul exhorteth to unity and humility.
2. 14. Of Timotheus, and Epaphroditus.
3. 1. St. Paul's ground of confidence.
3. 13. Exhortations to be like minded and heavenly minded.
4. 1. St. Paul exhorteth to stedfastness in all good things.
4. 10. St. Paul's contentment, thankfulness, salutations.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS ch. 1.

1. 1. St. Paul giveth thanks, and prayeth, for the Colossians.

LECTURE 532—543.

532. That we cannot have all things in common.
533. The right way and happy fruit of giving.
534. Almsgiving promotes thanksgiving.
535. The authority of Christian ministers.
536. That we should not commend ourselves.
537. What boasting is allowable.
538. We ought to suffer fools gladly.
539. That we must be content to be meanly esteemed.
540. Grace sufficient.
541. That we should have at heart the spiritual welfare of others.
542. How we ought to prove our own selves.
543. That we must live in peace with all.

LECTURE 544—554.

544. The true Gospel.
545. How anxious we ought to be for each other's souls.
546. On agreement, and deference to authority.
547. We die unto the Law that we may live unto God.
548. Why men prefer to think that they are justified by works.
549. Salvation by promise our Christian inheritance.
550. The value of the truth.
551. Zeal, good and evil.
552. Christian liberty.
553. The works of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit.
554. That we must glory in the cross of Christ.

LECTURE 555—566.

555. The Holy Spirit the earnest of our inheritance.
556. The knowledge of Christ.
557. By grace we are saved through faith.
558. Agreement of Christians with each other.
559. How we should help to make God's goodness known.
560. Knowledge, faith, and love.
561. Sincerity in love.
562. That we must advance in holiness, as well as avoid sin.
563. Spiritual wakefulness and circumspection.
564. The spiritual marriage of Christ with his church.
565. That we must do all as unto the Lord.
566. The duty of praying for each other.

LECTURE 567—574.

567. That we must in any case rejoice if Christ be preached.
568. Spiritual courage.
569. God's help is our great encouragement.
570. What characters are most to be esteemed.
571. That we must count all things loss for Christ.
572. The excellency of our Christian inheritance.
573. Of the peace of God keeping our hearts and minds.
574. That we must give largely, and for God's glory.

LECTURE 575.

575. Who it is that gave himself for us.

COLOSSIANS ch. 1—4.

1. 16. St. Paul setteth forth his ministry.
2. 1. St. Paul had great conflict for his converts.
2. 13. Ordinances that were against us blotted out.
3. 1. How to be risen with Christ.
3. 14. Charity. Family relationship.
4. 1. Concluding salutations.

**St. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS
ch. 1—5.**

1. 1. St. Paul prays and gives thanks for the Thessalonians.
2. 1. How St. Paul had preached the Gospel to the Thessalonians.
2. 13. St. Paul thanks God on behalf of the Thessalonians.
3. 1. St. Paul testifieth his regard for the Thessalonians.
4. 1. Exhortations to advancement in purity and love.
4. 13. St. Paul would not have us ignorant concerning the deceased.
5. 1. St. Paul exhorteth to watchfulness.
5. 14. That St. Paul's doctrine is practical.

**St. PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS
ch. 1—3.**

1. 1. St. Paul speaketh of the righteous judgment of God.
2. 1. Of the man of sin.
2. 13. St. Paul gives thanks and prays for the Thessalonians.
3. 1. St. Paul's own example, and his salutation.

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THE
NEW TESTAMENT
OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW.

LECTURE 1.

That we should receive with thankfulness, and obey with love, the Gospel of Christ.

THE Gospel according to St. Matthew is the first in order of several distinct writings, which form what is called the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. These works, taken altogether, contain the whole of what it has pleased God to have recorded, of his truth revealed to man, by his Son manifest in the flesh. And the word testament, meaning the same as a will, serves to signify both how great gifts are herein conveyed to us for an inheritance; and also how surely they are secured to us, by being sealed with what the apostle calls, "the death of the testator." Heb. 9. 16. God it is who made this will. God it is who thus disposed of that which was his own to give to whom He would. God it is, who, in the person of Jesus Christ, died for man. And by his most precious death man became entitled to eternal life. This Testament then is God's Testament. It is the written title of God's love to sinful man, and of man's undeserved inheritance in heaven with God. Let us value it, not merely as we would a document that proved our right to some unlooked for and large estate; but much more, as much, if possible, as heaven is better than earth, and the favour of God than the vain esteem of man.

And observe it is the New Testament. One there was before it, called the Old Testament, made on purpose to prepare the way for this. This is the New Testament; that which hath made the other old, that which maketh new all things else. For here we have a new covenant, and a new promise, a new commandment, and a new gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, to make us a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within us. This is the new, it is the last, testament. It is the last revelation God has given, and it is the last he will give, for the instruction of mankind. It is the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of one who bought us with a price, and therefore is our Lord; who saved us from sin and death, and therefore is our Saviour; our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us receive it, as his faithful servants, with devout attention; with thankfulness and affection and zeal, as a people redeemed by his blood.

In this New Testament, which is often called altogether the Gospel, there are, besides other writings, four historical accounts of some chief particulars in the life and death of Christ. These are called by way of distinction, the four Gospels. For Gospel means good tidings from God to man. And the words and works, the life and death of Christ, are, beyond comparison, of all other tidings the best. On these are founded, and to these refer, the history of the Acts of the Apostles, their Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John, which is of the nature of an epistle to the seven churches in Asia. All rest on the one great fact, which it is the main business of the Gospels to relate, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1. 15. This is the light which the people that sat in darkness saw, and which is sprung up to them that sat in the region and shadow of death. See Matt. 4. 16. This is the kingdom of heaven which is proclaimed to be to all of us at hand. See Matt. 4. 17. This is "the dispensation of the grace of God," these "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph. 3. 2, 8. This is, in one word, the Gospel. Let us be joyful and thankful to possess it, to hear it, to read it, and to the utmost of our ability, to know and do it.

Of this Gospel there are four separate histories. St. Matthew the writer of the first was called, from being a publican, to be one of the twelve apostles. He had enjoyed therefore the advantage of being constantly in the company of our blessed Lord. What he had thus seen and heard he was guided by the Holy Spirit of God to set down without risk of error. Well may we praise God for having bestowed on one of the children of men this eminence of usefulness; for having guided the pen of a publican and sinner to edify the Christian world. For ourselves let us lay to heart the divine assurance, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20. 29. Blessed are we who in the word of an apostle have the word of Christ, and in the word of Christ have the word of God. Blessed are we if having we believe, if believing we love, and with love obey.

God grant that we may receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls! See James 1. 21. God grant that this Gospel may be unto us "the power of God unto salvation!" Rom. 1. 16.

The genealogy of Christ.

1 THE book of the ¹generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 ²Abraham begat Isaac; and ³Isaac begat Jacob; and ⁴Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And ⁵Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and ⁶Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Raehab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And ⁷Jesse begat David the king; and ⁸David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife of Urias*;

7 And ⁹Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;

9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;

10 ¹⁰And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;

11 And ¹¹Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

12 And after they were brought to Babylon, ¹²Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

¹ Luke 3. 23. ² Gen. 21. 3. ³ Gen. 25. 20.

⁴ 1 Sam. 16. 1. & 17. 12. ⁵ 2 Sam. 12. 24.

|| Some read, *Josias begat Jakim, and Jakim begat Jechonias.*

⁶ Gen. 29. 35.

⁷ Gen. 38. 27.

⁸ 1 Chr. 2. 5. Ruth 4. 18.

⁹ 1 Chron. 3. 10.

¹⁰ 2 Kings 20. 21. 1 Chron. 3. 13.

¹¹ 1 Chron. 3. 16, 17.

§ 2. *Christ made in the likeness of sinful flesh.*

The Gospel of St. Matthew begins with an account of the genealogy of Christ, that is, with a list of the several successive persons through whom his descent was reckoned from Abraham down to Joseph. The extraction of Joseph, thus recorded, proves also the extraction of Mary the mother of Jesus; it being the custom of the Jews both to marry within the same family, and to reckon their genealogies by the males. Thus the first point established in the New Testament is, what has been called by an ancient father of the church, the *manhood of God*; the fact, most important in our redemption, that the eternal Word was in Jesus Christ "*made flesh.*" John 1. 14. Let us not then be surprised if most times throughout the Gospel He is represented, and speaks of Himself, as the Son of man, rather than as the Son of God. Let us not hence derive any false impression as to his divine nature, and eternal existence. That He was truly God, one single assertion, and there are many to the purpose, is sufficient to prove. This once established, it was needful, for our encouragement in faith and hope, to remind us by frequent repetition that He was for us made truly man.

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." These two are thus particularly mentioned, because to them it had been promised that the Messiah should descend from their offspring: to Abraham, Gen. 22. 18, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed:" to David, Psalm 132. 11, "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne;" that throne, of which it is elsewhere said, 2 Sam. 7. 13, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." And further, both these persons, namely David and Abraham, were on some remarkable occasions made types of Christ, in their faithful obedience to the will of God.

It is to be noted, that, in this genealogy, the mothers are mentioned only in those instances, to which some real scandal was attached, or against which, at least, some objection might be likely to arise in the apprehension of the Jews. Thus "Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar;" a transaction most disgraceful to both parents; in which however the patriarch was forced to confess "She hath been more righteous than I." Gen. 38. 26. "And Salmon begat Booz of Raehab," whom St. James, 2. 25, calls "the harlot." "And Booz begat Obed of Ruth," that is, a "Moabitess," Ruth 4. 5, a stranger to Israel. And lastly, "David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;" the very person with whom he had most grievously transgressed.

Here we see how our blessed Lord, in submitting to an earthly parentage, disdained not to have reckoned among his ancestors the chief of sinners. He came, the son of David, the son of Abraham, but the son also of the harlot, of the stranger, of the adulteress. Made He was "*in the likeness of sinful flesh,*" Rom. 8. 3, and connected with a long line of parents subject to every human infirmity. And yet by the marvellous manner of his conception He was born without spot of sin; and yet by the indwelling of "*all the fulness of the Godhead,*" Col. 2. 9, He was incapable of sinning. From his condescension, let us learn humility; from his mercy, love towards each other. Let us resolve, after this pattern of his love, to decline neither toil, nor pain, nor shame, in doing good unto mankind; even as He freely came down from heaven, and took on Him the seed of sinners like ourselves, that we might be made the children of grace, and inheritors of everlasting life.

The conception and birth of Christ.

18 Now the¹ birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 ² And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt

call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 ³ Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and *||* they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

¹ Luke 1. 27.

² Luke 1. 31.

³ Is. 7. 14.

|| Or, his name shall be called.

§ 3. That we must be born again to newness of life.

Our Lord, we see from this passage, was “conceived by the Holy Ghost,” and “born of the Virgin Mary.” (Apostles’ Creed.) Thus was fulfilled a prophecy uttered by Isaiah seven hundred years before. Isa. 7. 14. Thus too are we prepared to regard Him as more than man, even as the only begotten Son of God. Had He been no more than a human prophet, the ordinary method would have sufficed for his nativity. But this miraculous conception confirms the assertion of the apostle, Heb. 1. 1, 2, that “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

And thus much is plainly signified by his very name, which according to the prophecy was to be Emmanuel, or, God with us; whereas the angel bade them call Him Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins.” Hence we learn that “a Saviour” and “God with us” mean nearly the same thing; and that the Son of Mary was both at once. For no one less than God was capable of making atonement for all the sins of us all. To be a Saviour therefore it was necessary to be God with us, to be Jesus He must needs be at the same time Emmanuel. And the angel and the prophet, though using different words, imply both of them the same thing, “to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” 2 Cor. 5. 19.

This then was his great object in so doing, “to save his people from their sins.” Now his people are all they who hear his word, who profess his faith, who bear his name. His people then are we; us would He save both from the punishment and from the power of sin. Let us then beware of regarding Christ, and his atonement, merely as a help to escape the consequences of transgression. Let us beware of supposing, that because we have God for our Saviour, we may therefore the more securely do wrong, therefore the more innocently neglect to do right. Far from it. He was called Jesus to signify that He should save his people from their sins; not merely from condemnation after offence, but from offending so as to be subject to condemnation. And sufficient as are his merits to atone for the sins of the whole world, yet those of us only must hope to profit effectually by his death, who by the influence of his grace are now renewed in our lives, so renewed, as to forsake sin and to become zealous of good works.

Let us then thus improve to our growth in holiness the nativity of our blessed Lord, that thus hereafter we may reap the fruit of it in happiness for ever. For “on this wise” was his birth, in order that we might enjoy a new birth; a birth, not like unto our own, in sin and sorrow, but like his, pure and without spot. He was made flesh, that we might walk in the Spirit. He dwelt among us on earth, that we might dwell with Him in heaven. And we here beheld his glory, that He there might reveal unto us a glory for ourselves. Let us lay to heart this great mystery of godliness, “God was manifest in the flesh.” 1 Tim. 3. 16. Let us note how plainly it is now to us revealed, and revealed for the very purpose that it may make us godly. We were lost, and He was born to save us. We were fallen, and He came to lift us up. We were weak, and He gives us strength; dead, and He raises us to life. This is our birth; this our new birth unto righteousness in Christ Jesus. This is the change wrought in us by his grace at baptism, and confirmed continually by his grace through life. We too come anew into the world, not indeed from glory into suffering and shame, but from shame and sorrow unto holiness and hope. Holiness in this life, and heaven in the next, these are the new faculties, this the new inheritance of our true Christian nativity. Ours they are through Christ’s birth; they are ours through his death. May He keep them ours by his guardian grace, and we, by the faithful service of our own devoted lives.

The wise men out of the east worship Christ.

1 Now when ¹ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 ² And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall || rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they || presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

¹ Luke 2. 6.

² Mic. 5. 2. John 7. 42.

|| Or, *feed*.

|| Or, *offered*.

§ 4. *That our worship must be spiritual.*

These wise men from the east, or magians as they were called, were persons of distinction in their own country, both for sanctity and learning. They enjoyed by tradition some knowledge of the ancient prophecies relating to the Messiah. In consequence of these prophecies there was a general expectation throughout the heathen world that some great personage was at this time about to arise. We may consider therefore this visit of the magians, directed as it was by a star in the heavens, to signify the introduction of Christ to the Gentiles, to intimate that his birth concerned them no less than the chosen race of Israel. We see too in their conduct, as contrasted with that of Herod, a specimen of the obedience and of the disobedience fulfilled afterwards by each people respectively. He, who lived in the light of the law and the prophets, sought to know the place of Christ's abode, only in order to compass his destruction. Whilst the strangers of the east with devoted zeal pursued their way to the lowly manger, and offered reverently to the new born babe, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Herod pretends a design to worship Christ that he may the better make sure of his wicked purpose. Here note how often flattery is employed not to conceal only, but to further, intended harm! Remark also how the information, which Herod and the chief priests furnished, served to assist the wise men in their search. So often is the malice of the wicked made by Providence to minister to the designs of the good! And whereas, in their simplicity they suspected no ill intention, and would have gone back to Herod as he bade them, they are directed by an angel to return another way. So true it is that they who put their trust in God need fear no manner of thing that is ill!

The gifts they offered were, no doubt, the most esteemed productions of their own country, designed to express their homage to Him before whom they fell down and worshipped. We who have the light of his example, and the benefit of his teaching, in the Gospels, must remember that the offering God best loves is a meek and quiet spirit, a faithful and obedient heart. Where these are wanting, vain is all other show of service. No formal worship, no offering of wealth, or of all that wealth can purchase, will be welcome, where the soul is dead, and the life unconformed to his will. Ours is a dispensation in which the widow's mite is preferred to the wisdom of the wise, to the gold, the frankincense, the myrrh of the east. Let us rejoice to think that we have within ourselves, through grace, each of us, the means, to offer what He will esteem, to whom belong all the treasures of earth, yea, all the glories of eternity.

Thus shall the star which troubled all Jerusalem fill us, as it did these Gentiles, with exceeding great joy. Thus shall the sovereignty of things earthly cease, and the dominion of Christ over our hearts be established in its stead. Herod may do his worst to maintain the throne of worldly state; in vain do the sensual, the covetous, and the proud, uphold, against the evidence of things unseen, the vanities of this present life. The true king of the Jews, the real sovereign of all the world, is Christ. Even He, who there lies in a manger, is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Him then let us adore, whether in the lowly condition of a child, or as sitting at the right hand of the Father, in the light that cannot be approached. As children of the faith of Abraham let us acknowledge his sovereign right to the best we have to offer. The star which guides us is his word. This let us follow diligently whithersoever it leads. Whether to the courts of princes, or to the cottage of the poor, whether to abundance or to want, to labour or to rest, to whatever duties or difficulties it points, only let us obey its heavenly direction, and in the end it will bring us to the presence of our Lord.

The flight into Egypt, the murder of the innocents, the return from Egypt.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ¹ Out of Egypt have I called my son.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by ² Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

21 And he arose, and took the young-child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

¹ Hos. 11. 1.

² Jer. 31. 15.

§ 5. *Deliverance from spiritual fear and bondage.*

The birth of our blessed Lord was soon followed by persecution⁶. Herod apprehending that Christ would prove a powerful prince, and be likely to interfere with his own sovereign authority, resolved by all means to destroy Him. For this purpose it was that he enquired so diligently of the wise men, v. 7, "what time the star appeared," and bade them when they had found the young child bring him word again. For the attainment of this object too he sent forth and slew all the male children in Bethlehem "from two years old and under," that is, all who had entered into their second year. So readily does ambition, whether in high or low, lead on the worldly mind from sin to sin! So easy is the progress from pride to jealousy, from jealousy to fraud, and violence, and bloodshed!

But the providence of God had in both cases effectually secured the life of the infant Jesus. The wise men were directed by a heavenly dream to depart into their own country another way. And Joseph was instructed, by the same method of revelation, to avoid the indiscriminate fury of Herod, by a private flight into Egypt. Thence, in due time, at Herod's death, he returned under the like direction towards Judaea; not indeed to dwell at Bethlehem, for fear of Herod's son, then reigning, but at Nazareth, a city of Galilee. So surely does the arm of the Almighty frustrate the malice of wicked men! So vainly do the "kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together: against the Lord, and against his anointed." Ps. 2. 2.

Every thing connected with the infancy of Christ is seen in this history to have been conducted under express divine guidance. Four times already we have read of those heaven sent visions which the chosen servants of God had some method of distinguishing from ordinary dreams. Four times we have met with prophecy providentially verified; in the birth at Bethlehem, in the massacre of the innocents, in the return from Egypt, in the abode at Nazareth. Let us then by these things be reminded of the spiritual world in the midst of which we live. Let them quicken in us that saving faith which is "the evidence of things unseen." Heb. 11. 1. Let them relieve us under the pressure of spiritual fear; let them assure us of deliverance from spiritual bondage.

Around us live ministering spirits, angels, in number countless, mighty in power, commissioned to protect from harm the faithful servants of a heavenly Lord. Above, beneath, about, within us, is He who dwelleth in heaven, who preserves us, redeemed us, and makes us holy. Vain then are the arts of a deceitful world, vain the malice of evil spirits, shortlived the bondage of this Egypt of sin, in which for a while we are detained from the land of promise. What though no vision is now vouchsafed, no inspired dream to be expected, yet the same eternal Being who once ordered these miracles for our perpetual instruction, now dwells by grace in our hearts, there warns us against sin, there delivers us from its power, there urges us to obedience and heavenly hope. In his written word we enjoy our divine revelation, a vision of things heavenly not to be mistaken, a sure and certain direction of the way to eternal life, and a promise infallible of help to its attainment. Let us under that holy guidance walk ever in the path of God's commandments. Let us avoid danger, where we may without sin, by prudent flight. Let us be still mindful of the country we seek above, even when here we seem most remote from its enjoyment. Let us gladly turn aside from the strife of persecution, and from the bondage of iniquity, to dwell with Jesus in the peaceful Nazareth of a holy and religious life.

The preaching of John in the wilderness.

1 In those days came ¹ John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, ² The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them,

³ O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits || meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, ⁴ We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: ⁵ therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 ⁶ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

¹ Mark 1. 4. Luke 3. 2.
^a Ch. 7. 19.

² Is. 40. 3. Mark 1. 3.
^b Mark 1. 8. Luke 3. 16. John 1. 26.

³ Ch. 12. 34.

|| Or, answerable to amendment of life.

⁴ John 8. 39.

§ 6. *That repentance is the due preparation for receiving the Gospel.*

Not only is our Lord Himself the subject of prophecy, but even the office of his forerunner is distinctly foretold. This, as well as the place of his ministry, and the subjects he would chiefly insist on, all these are very plainly described beforehand by Isaiah. His dress and manner of life were suitable to his preaching, for he practised self denial, whilst he proclaimed repentance. The people whom he addressed were, as we learn from St. Paul, bent upon establishing their own righteousness. See Rom. 10. 3. The first steps therefore to be taken in preparing them for the Gospel were to make them conscious of sin, and to enforce on them the necessity of that hearty contrition without which no sin can be forgiven.

They resorted to the preaching of John, expecting to receive from him, as they had from the false prophets of those days, encouragement in their plans of temporal grandeur. They reckoned perhaps to find in him a successful leader, who should restore to Israel their lost dominion. They beheld instead, one who had not only renounced the glories of the world, but had denied himself also the comforts, yea, the necessities of life. They heard him proclaim no kingdom save that of heaven, no war save that against sin. They found him reproving even their honoured sects, the Pharisees and Sadducees, demolishing all vain trust in their father Abraham, and warning every one that they must repent in earnest, or be assuredly overtaken by the wrath to come. Nor does he assume in all this any authority to himself. On the contrary he plainly tells them, "he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He shall purify our souls as metal in the furnace; consuming the image of the earthy, and bringing out the image of the heavenly. He shall, "gather his wheat into the garner," take into the arms of his mercy all true penitents; but sentence to destruction the vain, the negligent, the wilful sinner, "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

From this passage we may learn that the frame of mind most suitable for the due receiving of the Gospel is a state of sincere repentance. Those who for the first time hear it must repent, and so will become fit to hear it with profit. Those who have already heard it, but have not yet laid it to heart, must now repent, if they would henceforth effectually believe it. They must be changed in the inward disposition, in the mind, or heart, or soul; changed so as to love what before they hated, and to hate what before they loved; so as to hate the ways of sin, and to love the ways of holiness.

Further we learn from John's preaching and practice compared, that a conviction of the vanity of sensual delights is the first step towards a taste for things heavenly. Nothing is more inconsistent with true conversion of heart, than an indolent luxurious enjoyment of the good things of this world. For as a tree is known by its fruits, so will our repentance be esteemed, not by tears and sighs and professions, but by the change which ensues from evil unto good. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." What other then than this can be the end of that Christian, whose profession leads not to a holy life?

Lastly we see how vain is all trust in the mere possession of spiritual privileges, except according as we profit by them. To be children of Abraham, we need not indeed partake of his blood, but we must inherit his willing reliance on God, and his obedience to the divine commands. With faith such as he exerted, with repentance such as John enjoins, let us daily prepare our hearts for the final coming of our Lord. That so, when He shall purge his floor, we may through his merits and his grace be counted for that good grain, which is to be stored in heaven for ever.

John baptizeth Christ in Jordan.

13 ¹ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

¹ Mark 1. 9. Luke 3. 21.

§ 7. *The new birth of Christians by baptism.*

The office of St. John was to prepare the minds of men for the coming of Christ. He was reluctant therefore to officiate towards the person whose mere messenger he felt himself to be. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me," I require that baptism of the Holy Ghost which Thou must dispense, "and comest thou to me," to my baptism of water only? "Suffer it to be so now," is the answer of our Lord, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." This means, that it became Christ to give the sanction of his example to John's baptism as a divine ordinance, and one which He meant to adopt in the Gospel. And it became John also to comply with the request of the Being, whom he confessed to be so much mightier than himself. And further, this ceremony appears to have signified the introduction of Jesus to the office of priest. For thus we read in Exodus 29. 4. "Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water."

Thus our Lord, we see, in entering on his priestly office, submitted to be baptized by one who had need rather to have been baptized by Him; teaching us thereby, whatever circumstances of advantage we may enjoy, so much the more diligently "to fulfil all righteousness;" and confirming the proverb of the inspired king, "Before honour is humility," Prov. 18. 12. Honour, truly, and that most signal, attended immediately on this act of humility. For at his baptism "the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God," the Holy Ghost, that is, "descending like a dove," coming down with like gentle movement, "and lighting upon him." The dove, the most harmless of birds, was, we know, the messenger of peace to the family of Noah in the ark, after their long tossing on the waves of the deluge. And now it is made the sign of that heavenly peace, which the ministry of Christ was to bring upon the earth, which the grace of God's Holy Spirit is able to confer amidst the troubled waters of this life's trial. Lighting on the "beloved Son," it testified to his divine parentage; as did also a voice from heaven, adding, "in whom I am well pleased."

So is it at the baptism He ordained for his disciples. Children, of wrath, by nature, we are hereby made sons of God. hateful through sin to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, we are washed clean in the laver of regeneration, born again to a renewed nature, to new powers, to new hopes, to new privileges, to new duties. Let us perform those duties, improve those privileges, hold fast those hopes, and exercise those powers. Let us endeavour, as becometh us, "to fulfil all righteousness." Then shall the heavens be opened to us also, and He that dwelleth in them will acknowledge us for sons, in whom for Christ's sake He is well pleased.

For here note, that it was of Christ, and of Christ only, that this voice was heard, that these words were spoken. He alone it is throughout all this world below, in whom God is well pleased for his own sake. Not in man; for man is fallen. Not in us; for we are sinful. Not in all that He hath made, and once saw to be "very good," Gen. 1. 31; for all this hath fallen with our fall, and with ourselves is devoted to destruction. Only in Christ is God well pleased; only in Christ, and through Him and through his merits, in them that are Christ's. In the contrite sinner, in the sincere believer, in the obedient follower of Christ's example; in the meek, the pure in heart, the merciful, the peacemakers, in those who love as they have been loved by Him, and forgive as by Him they hope to be forgiven. In these, for Christ's sake, not for their own, but for his and for his only; in these, as in sons, is God well pleased. These doth He encourage by a voice from heaven, even by his word speaking peace unto their souls. To these are the heavens opened; that thence on them God's Spirit may descend, and thither draw them up hereafter to dwell with Christ for ever.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" 1 John 3. 1. God grant that the fire we have been baptized with, may light up in our minds clear views of Gospel truth, kindle in our hearts a holy flame of spiritual affection, consume all evil thoughts, all fleshly lusts, form like unto itself our earthly nature, and make our reluctant spirits mount upwards, in a life of thankfulness and love!

Christ is tempted of the Devil in the wilderness.

1 Then was ¹ Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, ² Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, ³ He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands

they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, ⁴ Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, ⁵ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

¹ Mark 1. 12. Luke 4. 1.

² Deut. 8. 3.

³ Psal. 91. 11

⁴ Deut. 6. 16.

⁵ Deut. 6. 13. & 10. 20.

§ 8. *The use of temptation, and the means of subduing it.*

Jesus did not of Himself seek these temptations, much less then may we presume to court any needless trial. Yet was He for this purpose “led up of the spirit into the wilderness.” And hence we may understand, that temptation, under the divine control, is administered for our exercise in obedience and faith. Convinced, therefore, that all things are ordered by God’s Holy Spirit for our good, let us, as St. James bids us, 1. 2. 3, “count it all joy when” we “fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of” our “faith worketh patience.” That it may more surely do so, to our endless comfort, let us note diligently what follows of our Lord’s temptation in the wilderness.

The tempter first appeals to the sense of hunger, “Command that these stones be made bread;” then to the pride of superiority, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down;” then to the love of this world’s pomps and vanities, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” In each case our Lord replies with words taken from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He resists not by the manifestation of divine power, but by such weapons of warfare as are within the reach of every one of us, even “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Eph. 6. 17.

For to us also does Satan apply the like malicious arts: to our lusts, to our pride, to our covetousness, to every evil passion we feel within us, offering opportunity, and whispering hope of safety. Let us then derive this lesson from the conduct of our heavenly Teacher, to resist firmly, by an entire reliance on God’s word, on God’s promise, on God’s aid. No temptation can possibly befall us, for which an appropriate defence may not thence be derived. Let us then lay to heart most earnestly those passages of holy writ which apply most closely to our besetting sins. Are we apt to be proud? Let us repeat to ourselves continually how God “giveth grace to the humble.” 1 Pet. 5. 5. Are we cross to each other? Let us say over and over again, “Blessed are the meek,” Matth. 5. 5. Are we covetous? Let us have ever ready to quote against ourselves, “Covetousness, which is idolatry.” Col. 3. 5.

And let us remember for our especial comfort the reflection of the apostle on this our Lord’s own case of temptation, Heb. 2. 18; “In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” He knoweth the better all our wants; and will the better help all our infirmities. Whilst here He abode in flesh as a man, not only did He in this one single instance discomfit the tempter, but He experienced also repeated efforts of his malice, in want and weariness, in sorrow, and oppression, and persecution, in the desertion of friends, and in the agony of death. But it is in heaven that now He dwelleth, and thence sendeth succour to them that are tempted. In Him therefore let us the more readily trust, not trusting so as to be idle ourselves, but so as to labour with more hope of success.

It was when Christ had been glorified at his baptism, “then” that He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. It is when we have by grace been brought most close to God, then we may most expect that He will lead us, as the Israelites, in the wilderness of temptation, to humble us, and to prove us, and to know what is in our hearts. See Deut. 8. 2. It is when we use all diligence in working out our own salvation, then it is that to reckon on God’s help is to trust with Christian faith. But to reckon on it when we wilfully do wrong, or idly neglect to do right, this is not to trust, but to tempt Him. Let us believe without presuming, and trust without tempting God. So shall he whom we resist flee from us; and, behold, angels will come and minister unto us! Sent forth we know they are “to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” Heb. 1. 14. Let us hope then, if at least we have hope of heaven, let us hope that to ourselves they are sent. And when we consider that we are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” “let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Heb. 12. 1.

Christ beginneth to preach, to choose his apostles, and to heal the sick.

12 ¹ Now when Jesus had heard that John was || cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15 ² The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

17 ³ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

18 ⁴ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son of* Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judæa, and from beyond Jordan.

¹ Mark 1. 14. Luke 4. 14. John 4. 43.

|| Or, *delivered up*.

² Is. 9. 1.

³ Mark 1. 14.

⁴ Mark 1. 16.

§ 9. *The nature of our Christian calling.*

On hearing of the outrage offered to John the Baptist, our Lord departs from the neighbourhood; teaching us to avoid danger when we may, as well as to meet it fearlessly when we ought. The reason of his leaving Nazareth was the ill treatment He there received, as related by St. Luke, 4. 16—30. By coming to dwell at Capernaum, He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, 9. 1. “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” Hence we learn, first, that the Gospel was intended from the first to be spread abroad among the Gentiles as well as Jews. And secondly, that there is no ignorance so dark, no iniquity so hardened, but that it may be enlightened and reformed by its healing influence. The manner of that influence we may in some measure collect from the chief subject of our Lord’s first teaching. He “began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Repentance, which begins in sorrow, and ends in amendment of life, which consists in a thorough change of the inward disposition, from the love of sin to the love of holiness, which turns the thoughts from this world unto heaven, and the heart from this world’s vanities to the great God that reigns above, repentance, such as this, is the first ray of that light which beams from the Gospel on the soul of man.

In order the better to spread abroad this blessing, the apostles are appointed at the very beginning of their Master’s ministry; so that having heard all his words, and seen all his works, they might the better testify of these things to the world. And whom does the divine Teacher for this purpose first select? Not the eloquent, the learned, or the great; but, rather, a few plain fishermen of Galilee. By instruments thus evidently of themselves incompetent was the idolatry of the Gentiles discomfited, and the whole civilized world brought in subjection under the Gospel. An issue so strange, so beyond all reasonable expectation, so surpassing the means seen to be employed, as to force, both on them, and on us also, the conclusion, that “this is the finger of God.” Exodus 8. 19.

“They immediately,” that is, James and John, “left the ship and their father, and followed Him.” Here we see that there is no duty so sacred as that of following Christ, no business so important as to serve Him. The apostles were called to leave the very ship by which they earned their bread, nay, the very father whom they were dutifully assisting. And they left all, and followed Christ, even to persecution, disgrace, and death. Far easier is our call. To labour diligently for ourselves, to honour and support our parents, to live that life of faith and holiness which renders us at once respected by men, and esteemed for Christ’s sake by God; this is the sum of what is required to be done by Christians in general. Let not us then refuse to sacrifice any employments however profitable, any ties however dear, any sins however habitually indulged, when the word of Christ plainly requires it, for his service, and for our eternal good.

And whatsoever be the sickness that most affects our souls, whether fleshly lusts or regard for this world’s pomps; let us apply, like the people we here read of, to Him, who at his first coming healed thus freely all manner of grievous ailments. Readily we attend to each slight sickness of the body; and when we are seriously ill, we spare no pains, or cost, or self restraint, no distant consultation of the most eminent in skill, towards obtaining the recovery of the body. Much more then let us watch anxiously for the health of the spirit within. And in all its infirmities, let us have recourse with faith to the great Physician of souls.

Christ beginneth his sermon on the Mount.

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 *'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.*

5 *'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: ' for they shall be filled.*

7 *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

8 *'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

9 *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

10 *'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of 'evil against you † falsely, for my sake.*

12 *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

¹ Luke 6. 20.

² Ps. 37. 11.

³ Is. 65. 13.

⁴ Ps. 24. 4.

⁵ 1 Pet. 3. 14.

⁶ 1 Pet. 4. 14.

† Gr. lying.

§ 10. *The beatitudes, or descriptions of persons blessed.*

These three chapters, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, contain what is usually called our Saviour's sermon on the mount. He here expresses in a short and forcible manner some of the most important particulars of our Christian duty. In consequence probably of the miracles He had already performed, great numbers thronged to hear Him. He addressed Himself however chiefly to his disciples or apostles; whilst what He taught was of the deepest interest both to all his hearers, and to all mankind.

"*Blessed are the poor in spirit;*" that is, they who, being poor, are so also in spirit, are content to be poor, being humble in heart; all also, who, in any other situation of life, are like minded; content in all humility with such things as they have, with such treatment as they receive. This disposition seems to be first mentioned, because pride lies at the very root of man's transgression, and because humility is most absolutely necessary to his repentance and reform. "*For their's is the kingdom of heaven;*" that is, to them is allotted a sure portion in that state of peace, and hope, and glory which Christ in the Gospel proclaims. "*They that mourn*" are next blessed. They who grieve for their own sins, or, for the iniquity of the world; who when God is offended; when his majesty is affronted, his offers rejected, his goodness unrequited, either, as they must often see, in others, or, as they must often know in themselves; they who are thereby affected with real lively grief, even so as to do what people do that mourn in earnest, who shed tears, are sad in spirit, and take the less interest in the cares and pleasures of life; they are blessed. For "*they shall be comforted.*" They shall be comforted now; they shall be comforted hereafter. They shall be comforted by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, by his aid, by his inspired joy. They shall be comforted by the blessed sentence of that Judge who was Himself a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Isai. 53. 3.

"*The meek,*" in like manner, are next blessed; and they are assured that "*they shall inherit the earth.*" That is to say, they shall have a peculiar enjoyment even in this life, wherein few things so much embitter our existence as the dispositions opposite to meekness, namely, an angry, arrogant or contentious spirit. "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;*" whose desire to do their Christian duty, and to be counted righteous for Christ's sake, is such as for strength and efficacy may be compared to these natural appetites. "*For they shall be filled;*" satisfied, yet never cloyed; fed continually, yet never surfeited; the spiritual feast enduring unto death, and furnishing the nourishment of eternal life.

The blessing of the merciful is, that "*they shall obtain mercy.*" Have we then need of pardon? Let us not dare to seek revenge. Have we much to be forgiven? Let us then freely forgive; even after our heavenly pattern, unto the loving of those who most use us ill. The blessing of the pure in heart is, that "*they shall see God.*" Would we then enjoy his presence, would we dwell in the light of his countenance, would we here behold Him with the eye of faith, and hereafter with the sense celestial? our rule is, that we be pure, that we abstain from every action, word, or thought, which approaches the impurity He abhors.

The peacemakers too are blessed, "*for they shall be called the children of God.*" Brethren they are of that blessed Son who came down from heaven to reconcile to his Father lost mankind; brethren in their work of making peace, brethren in their title as children of the Most High, brethren in "the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1. 12. Lastly, there is a blessing, even "*the kingdom of heaven,*" for those who are "*persecuted for righteousness' sake.*" By which, we must observe, is meant the being persecuted, not for the profession, but for the practice of religion; not merely when men say evil of us, but when "*falsely;*" not when we submit to it for our own peace or gain, but when for Christ's sake. Persecution exactly such as this seldom can take place in a Christian country. But we may profitably call to mind this text whenever we incur censure, ridicule, or ill will, by the faithful discharge of our duty; and, in faithfully performing it, we may be encouraged by remembering that great is our "*reward in heaven.*"

Who are the salt of the earth.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: ¹ but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men ¹ light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, ² that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

¹ Mark 9. 50. Luke 14. 34.

² Mark 4. 21. Luke 8. 16. & 11. 33.

|| The word in the original signifieth a measure containing about a pint less than a peck.

³ 1 Peter 2. 12.

§ 11. *The effect of Christian example.*

These verses were spoken to the disciples specially as teachers of others: But our Lord, in thus addressing them before the assembled multitude, designed also to interest all who heard Him in duties which to a great degree relate obviously to all. All do in some measure teach others, by their example for instance, and conversation, nay by their very character for good or evil. According as we are seen to be in earnest Christians, or to live regardless of our profession, we make others to glorify our Father which is in heaven, or we dishonour in their eyes the Lord who bought us.

To all then who are named Christians, to all, it may be truly said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." If sound, ye might keep by your holiness and faith the whole world from spiritual corruption. But if your own lives grow corrupt, then are you alike unprofitable to others, and miserable in yourselves. Thus is it in our power to help to keep in health the souls that are around us ready to perish; it is in our power, as a Christian family. For it is of no small moment for them to know of a whole family taking pains together in the service of a heavenly Master. What they see in our lives, hear from our lips, and meet with in our conduct, these things may convince them that piety towards God and love towards man both are, through grace, attainable, and when attained are full of joy. The salutary influence of each word we utter, each deed we do, each thought we think, may thus extend not to our neighbours only, but through them to theirs. And we may become so far the salt of the earth, that hundreds whom we neither know nor think of shall be the better and the happier for our Christian behaviour. But if Christians, who well know what their duty is, be found wanting in zeal and devotion, if, that is, "the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" by what means can they who already well know their duty be enabled, if they do it not, to know it better? They are thenceforth "good for nothing but to be cast out." Their attainments, thus disgraced by sin, will only ensure them the greater condemnation.

"Ye are the light of the world." This figure again, though most appropriate to our Lord's immediate disciples; well expresses the condition of every family that lives in the profession of the Christian faith. We "cannot be hid." How we live, and what we do, are well seen by all those who dwell around us. And here what a powerful motive have we all to set an example of industry and temperance, of gentleness, humility, and good will towards each other! What an argument for each singly to take care, that no misconduct shall arise, to bring scandal on the cause which we are bound to promote! In vain would we put the candle under a bushel; in vain indulge the hope that our conduct is of no consequence to others, that we may sin on without fear of doing them harm, or need not try to amend, in order to do them good. Being Christians, and professing to be Christians indeed, men will set us, as a candle on a candlestick, so our conduct will they set up as a direction to their own. Light we cannot help to give, whether we will or not. Light for evil or for good, to all that are in the same household of faith, to all that are in the same abode of earthly existence. An excuse they will derive from our neglect, if we be negligent; from our sin, if we transgress, a justification in sin.

Rather let us then endeavour that our light may "so shine before men," as for them to glorify our "Father which is in heaven." Not so as for them to glorify ourselves, but to glorify God. The one is vanity, the other devotion; the one presumption, the other humility. Let us then, whilst thus we seek to give good light, prove not only in our words, but by the very manner of all we do, prove how deeply we are aware, that we are ourselves all the while "unprofitable servants." Luke 17. 10. And whilst most earnestly by our patience in well doing, by our diligence, faithfulness, and charity, we are trying to win others unto holiness, let our hearts be the more alive to our own manifold failings; let us remember ever that it is the Lord that lights our candle, see Psalm 18. 28; and let our behaviour, if not our lips, continually proclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise: for thy loving mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Psalm 115. 1.

Christ fulfilleth the law of the sixth commandment.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 ' Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

21 Ye have heard that it was said || by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry

with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 ' Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

¹ Luke 16. 17.

² James 2. 10.

|| Or, to them.

³ Exod. 20. 13. Deut. 5. 17.

⁴ Luke 12. 58.

§ 12. *The Gospel enforces in a more full sense the Law and the Prophets.*

The whole multitude who heard these words had been accustomed from infancy to hold in high reverence the divine dispensation under which they lived. Though they erred widely as to its spirit and intent, they were justly impressed with the conviction that it was ordained for their good by Almighty God. So that nothing would have made them more averse to receive the teaching of Christ, than a notion that He meant to destroy the law and the prophets. Here therefore He expressly declares beforehand, that He came not "to destroy, but to fulfil" them. The commandments which He was about to lay down were not to contradict those of Moses, but to enforce them in a more extensive sense. The doctrines He had to teach were not at variance with the teaching of the prophets, but were designed to explain further their holy lessons, and to apply them more closely to the hearts of the hearers. Thus it is that wilfully to break any one of our Lord's commandments, however comparatively small an one it may seem, either to break or teach others to break them, will prevent our advancement in the kingdom of heaven, nay, it will thrust us down to the very lowest place. For this would be a manifest violation of God's great design in both his revelations, the instruction of mankind in his will. Thus it is that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, by not consisting in the formal fulfilment of the commandments taken literally, but in readily applying to every event of life each separate precept of the Gospel, and in moulding our very inward dispositions after the pattern therein laid down.

This general principle is next explained in the case of the sixth commandment of the law. The scribes and Pharisees held themselves to have fully obeyed it, provided only they committed not actual murder. Not so must the Christian deem of this precept, as renewed, and fulfilled, that is fully and largely applied, by our Lord. Every word, look, or thought of evil, is to us sin, no less certainly than the act. Each provoking or contemptuous expression is shewn to deserve punishment, both in this world, and in the next. And the divine Teacher bids us leave even his own worship incomplete, his own gift unoffered on the altar, till we avoid this twofold curse by being first reconciled to our brother.

Who then, of us all, remembereth at this hour that his brother hath aught against him? Who is conscious of any grudge himself is cherishing, or of any that he has given cause, whether intentionally or not, for his brother to entertain? Who out of us that now are come together to offer on the domestic altar the gift of confession, prayer, and praise? First be reconciled. First, by all means, be thyself at peace, in thyself, at peace with all. Be reconciled, if it may be, as soon as possible, openly. Be reconciled, at all events, immediately, in thy own heart. So only can thy gift be acceptable. So only canst thou obey the command of God. For according to the Gospel of Christ, "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." 1 John 3. 15.

In this way then Christians are here taught to apply every commandment in the law of Moses; to take it, that is, in a more full sense, and to extend it from the outward actions to the inmost thoughts. Thus is the axe most truly laid to the very root of the tree; and the character of each person is thus pronounced to consist in the purposes of the heart. In these are to be found, or in these are wanting, that love to God and to our neighbour, which is the fulfilling of all the commandments. See Matt. 22. 37, 39. By these purposes of love let us then now examine ourselves, for by these we must be judged hereafter. Where these remain corrupt, vain is all outside show of holiness. And only where these are conformed to the Gospel pattern of divine truth, can we be reckoned to have fulfilled the precepts of our law, or to have entered into the kingdom of heaven.

Christ further fulfilleth the Law in the seventh commandment.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 'And if thy right eye || offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31 It hath been said, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That 'whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not take one hair white or black.

37 'But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

¹ Exod. 20. 14.

² Ch. 18. 8. Mark 9. 47.

|| Or, *do cause thee to offend.*

³ Deut. 24. 1.

⁴ Luke 16. 18. 1 Cor. 7. 10.

⁵ Exod. 20. 7.

Levit. 19. 12. Deut. 5. 11.

⁶ James 5. 12.

§ 13. *How we must restrain the lust of the eye and the license of the tongue.*

We have seen already, in the case of the sixth commandment, how the Gospel destroys not but fulfils the Law. The same principle is here applied to the seventh, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Purity, like kindness, to be a Christian grace, must be felt in the heart. Thence it is that evil thoughts arise, and there that they must be from the first suppressed. And whether it be with eye, or hand, that we are chiefly tempted to offend, that member we must restrain which lends its aid to sin, that thought cut off which prompts to hatred or to lust; lest also the whole body be cast into hell, the whole soul perish everlastingly.

To these general directions, we find here added a particular rule about divorcement. For the Jews, and much more the heathen nations of that period, held it lawful to put away their wives on the most trifling grounds. Thus the wayward inclinations of one party prevailed over those bonds which were ordained both as a remedy against sin, and for the mutual help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other. Thus strife and jealousy, confusion, and every evil work, took the place of what God in marriage had designed, domestic purity, and domestic peace.

Scandalous it is to the faith we profess, that in a Christian country the like offences should ever occur. And much it is to be regretted, that when they happen, they occupy both the thoughts and conversation of a neighbourhood. Remember, if such works of darkness are ever mentioned in your hearing, remember, the less you think of them, the less you speak of them, the better. The less pleasure you take in talking over the sins of others, the more likely you are to feel the weight of your own.* Let then any such extreme case of transgression make you consider how many risks you run yourselves, and how deeply you need the grace of God to preserve your feet from falling. Let it move you to give the more earnest heed to sober advice. Let it make you more distasteful of those vanities which prepare the way to ruin, and more distrustful of that ability of your own which is at the very best but weakness. Let it remind you to watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation; to watch and pray against whatever sin doth most easily beset you. And let it incline you to intercede for others also, even for these most flagrant offenders, in the charitable hope that it will please God, not only to strengthen such as do stand, and to comfort and help the weak hearted, but to raise up also them that fall, and finally to beat down Satan under their feet. (See Liturgy.)

And now further observe how Christ fulfils the Law, that is, fully interprets its meaning, in the important particular of swearing oaths. Because false swearing was prohibited, the Jews considered themselves allowed to swear in their ordinary discourse, provided only they took care to speak the truth. Our Lord shews that the forbidding of false oaths was but a step towards his more full prohibition, "Swear not at all." This is the rule of Christian perfection, this the state of things that would ensue, were but all men Christians indeed. No need to call God to witness, were we all honest and true, all sensible that whether we call on Him or not, He is witness to every word we utter! Were we meek, humble, self denying, and charitable, the plain utterance of yea or nay would answer every purpose of mutual information. "Whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." It cometh of the evil in our hearts, of our falsehood, our distrust of each other. It cometh of that evil spirit, who prompts the vain swearer wantonly to utter those profane words, of which he must give account hereafter.

Let us then not only never take God's name in vain, but promote also in all we say that practice of universal truth, which would make it plainly practicable to swear not at all.

Christ endeth the interpretation of the Law.

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, 'That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and 'from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and 'pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 'For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

¹ Exod. 21. 24. Levit. 24. 20. Deut. 19. 21.

² Deut. 15. 8.

⁴ Levit. 19. 18.

⁵ Luke 6. 27.

⁶ Luke 6. 29. Rom. 12. 17. 1 Cor. 6. 7.

⁸ Luke 23. 34. Acts 7. 60.

⁷ Luke 6. 32.

§ 14. *That we must overcome evil with good.*

The Law had said in Leviticus 24. 20, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." It allowed not this retaliation by way of private revenge, but ordained it for legal punishment. Hence the scribes and Pharisees, admitting that they were bound to love their neighbours, inferred what is nowhere written in the Law, that they were bound also to hate their enemies. But the severe retribution which the Law enforced was calculated not to encourage, but to check, the evil propensities of the heart. The unjust and violent were the less likely to do wrong to the peaceable and meek, under a system which required of every aggressor "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." This was the first method of restraining wickedness, namely, severity of punishment immediately to be accomplished by lawful authority.

It is therefore in fulfilment of this very law, for it was for the more effectual attainment of the same object, that our Lord now teaches "resist not evil." For this end He bids us submit without retaliation, to blows on the person, loss of property, and oppressive exaction of labour. Nay, further, He urges us to meet them by a voluntary subjection to fresh indignities; "turn to him the other" cheek "also," "let him have thy cloke also," "go with him twain." This is the new and Gospel method of baffling wrong and violence, if not banishing it from the world. This is a method which, though it may sometimes fail in softening and converting the oppressor, is sure to exercise and to improve our own humility, charity, and self command.

Here is added in the same spirit an injunction that we should give and lend to all that ask of us. Not as though we have ability to give to all; but that we should desire to give to all if we could, and should give actually to all as far as we can. He that has wherewith to give should be as much concerned to find some one to give to, as they who are in want are anxious to find some one who will help them. He should be as much concerned, nay more; more in the same proportion, as "it is more blessed," it is the saying of the Lord Jesus, "more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20. 35.

Thus too, instead of hating our enemies, we are to "bless them that curse" us, "do good to them that hate" us, and "pray for them which despitefully use and persecute" us. Here we have the tongue, the hand, and the heart, all pressed into the service of our enemies: the tongue to bless, the hand to help for good, and the heart to pray for their eternal warfare. So might we overcome evil with good. So might enmity, hatred, and persecution, by the conduct of faithful Christians, and by the influence of faith upon their hearts, be gradually and utterly rooted out of the world. Difficult we find this method to fulfil for our own share; difficult to be, as we are here commanded, perfect, as is our Father which is in heaven. But remember, if we fulfil it not, we remain no better than publicans. If we love only our own families and friends, the natives of our own country, or members of our own church, what do we more than the heathen? Whilst in proportion as we love all mankind, we become children of that heavenly Father, who "sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." We are created anew in the likeness of that Son, who prayed for them that nailed Him to the cross, who died for them that crucify Him afresh. And we approach to the pattern of that Holy Spirit, who still, even to them which grieve and resist Him, continues, until the very end of life, to offer grace unto salvation.

Christ continueth his sermon on the Mount.

1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward || of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore ¹when thou doest *thine* alms, || do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father

which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

|| Or, with.

¹ Rom. 12. 8.

|| Or, cause not a trumpet to be sounded.

§ 15. *Of almsgiving and prayer; and of God's seeing in secret.*

These injunctions of our Lord were directed against practices prevailing to a great degree among the Jews; namely, giving their alms in an ostentatious manner, and offering what should have been their solitary devotions in public and conspicuous stations. The rules here laid down for their instruction in these matters are applicable no less to us than to them. We have no less need than they to take heed that we do not our "alms before men, to be seen of them." And note, it is not merely the doing "alms before men," but the motive, "to be seen of them," this is what is here forbidden, this what we must take heed, very earnest precaution and pains, to avoid.

So also in the exercise of devotion, it is the desiring when we pray the praise of men, and not the mere praying in public, which is pronounced to be doing what the hypocrites do. In public we must needs often pray, as often as ever we pray together, either in a family, or in the congregation of the church. But even here we may apply this direction of our Lord. For here we may either pray with a desire to be seen of men, or with no regard to their presence or esteem. Let not then this vain desire actuate any portion of that service which is due to God Himself, and which we must render, if we would have Him accept it, entirely for God's own sake. Whosoever and wheresoever we pray, let our pure unmingled purpose be to be seen, to be heard, of Him.

Elsce is our lot cast for ever with the hypocrites, and our sentence pronounced in those awful words, "They have their reward." "They have" it. They have it now, in this world, such reward as this world offers; this is all that can possibly be gained by seeking the applause of men. This is the sentence of the hypocrites, to have here all that they are to have ever; to have nothing to hope for hereafter. This is "their reward;" not the reward of the faithful, not the "gift of God," not the blessing purchased by Christ for fallen man, imparted by Him freely to our prayers, and graciously by Him described as the reward of our devotion. Not this reward of his have they, but "their reward," that is, the praise of man on earth, laud hereafter "the wages of sin," the indignation of men and angels, and of God Himself, in the life that is to ast for ever.

He "seeth in secret." This is to be the motive of the disciple of Christ; the consciousness that God beholds him. This will help us to fulfil, to perform in a full and spiritual method, all the duties of almsgiving and prayer. An all powerful, all wise, all good Spirit is ever near us and round us; is privy to our very inmost thoughts, and views in every duty we perform the disposition with which we do it. He knoweth, not only what we do, but what we think, why we do it, for what object, with what design, what end. He knoweth it; and his knowing it is enough. Though man neither see nor suspect, though the left hand know not what the right hand doeth, though the nearest and dearest of our earthly friends scarce guess at the extent of either our gifts or prayers, they are only so much the more esteemed by our Father "which seeth in secret."

A deep conviction of this single truth, a continual sense of his continual presence, and of his knowing continually our most secret purposes, this will best secure in us the acceptable performance, not of alms only and prayer, but of every duty man has to perform, or God requires at his hands. Let us then, in all our thoughts and words and works, have regard to his all seeing eye. Let us consider first, in every thing we do, What will He think of it, what will He think of us? Let us esteem Him in our society to be that one chief Friend whose praise we most covet and whose censure we most fear. And let us look ever with hope to that reward of his, which through Christ, and through his merits, may in the end be ours.

God give us grace to see Him in all things, even Him who in all things seeth us. God make us to look mainly in all our doings to his will, even as He doth in all his dealings with us look only to our good!

Christ teacheth to pray.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain ¹repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: ²Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

¹ Eccles. 7. 14.

² Luke 11. 2.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, ~~for~~ ever. Amen.

14 ³For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

³ Mark 11. 25.

§ 16. *The Lord's Prayer explained.*

Long prayers or frequent prayers are not what are meant by these vain repetitions. For our Lord Himself "continued all night in prayer." Luke 6. 12. And his apostle has enjoined on all Christians "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. 5. 17. The repetitions here forbidden in our prayers we must understand to be such as were used by the priests of Baal, 1 Kings 18. 26, calling "from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us." We have another instance of the like practice in the men of Ephesus, Acts 19. 34, who "all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians." They, it seems, thought they should be heard through their much speaking; so as to communicate their wants, and to enforce their wishes. We on the contrary acknowledge of our heavenly Father that He is "more willing to hear than we to pray," (Liturgy;) and we are here assured by Christ Himself, that He "knoweth what things we have need of before we ask." We ask then, not for his information, but for the expression of our own humble dependence, and out of a conviction that thus it is He best delights to give. We ask because He hath said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. 7. 7. And whatever we repeat in our prayers, is only that we may renew our devotion, only that by our attention at one time we may make up for the wandering of our thoughts at another.

For our direction we have here a form of words set down by our Lord, which should both frequently be used as a prayer, and may be taken also for a pattern of what all our prayers should be. "Our Father." We are to address the Almighty as a Father, to pray to Him, with reverence and love, as to one who made us and careth for us. "Which art in heaven;" who dwellest not visibly on earth, but whom by faith we see, or ought to see, in heaven thy dwellingplace. "Hallowed be thy name." We desire that thy holy Name may be worshipped devoutly by all. "Thy kingdom come." We pray that soon may be consummated, both in earth and heaven, the happiness thou hast revealed to mankind, soon the period of our warfare be accomplished, soon arrive the time when the knowledge of Thee shall cover the earth, and sin and sorrow shall be no more.

Meanwhile we pray further, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Give grace to us and to all mankind, that we may both know and do thy will; conforming to it the desire of our hearts, and exercising our souls in its devout fulfilment. "Give us this day our daily bread;" "neither poverty nor riches." Prov. 30. 8, neither want nor excess, but, according to our several stations, the food convenient for us. And yet rather to our souls impart the bread of life, such measure of divine grace as may ever from day to day, whilst life endures, stablish, strengthen, settle us. See 1 Pet. 5. 10. "And forgive us our debts," the many sins we commit, the many trespasses we are guilty of, the many debts we owe to Thee. Forgive them, O Lord, even as Thou hast bidden us to forgive those who thus owe to us, and even as by thy grace we desire and endeavour most entirely to do. "And lead us not into temptation;" not into any more, or more severe than we can bear. "But deliver us from evil;" save us in each trial Thou orderest for us, save us from the power of the evil one, from the evil contagion of a wicked world, from the evil influence of our corrupted nature. "For thine is the kingdom;" Thou rulest over all: thine "the power;" the power to support, to deliver, to save: thine "the glory;" the glory of all the good we do, of all the good we enjoy, of our creation, preservation, and redemption; "for ever," to all eternity.

Such is the prayer which our Lord has set forth for our instruction. Let us endeavour to pray always "after this manner;" always for spiritual rather than temporal blessings; always with the fervent desire of the inmost heart. Therein let it be our first aim, when praying, to cherish fervent love towards God and man. And often as, either in these, or in any other words, we seek what most we need, the forgiveness of our sins, let us remember the condition here so powerfully enforced; it is only if we "forgive men their trespasses" that our heavenly Father will also forgive ours.

Of fasting ; and where our treasure is to be laid up.

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 ¹ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 ² The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

¹ Luke 12. 33. 1 Tim. 6. 19.

² Luke 11. 34.

§ 17. The duty and manner of fasting ; the cure of covetousness.

Fasting is to deny ourselves, either in quantity or kind, the food we feel inclined to take. Of this practice, as a religious exercise, we find traces in almost all parts of Scripture history. But though it is evident from several passages in the New Testament that Christians are expected on due occasions to fast, we find nowhere any very particular directions for so doing, nor any where, except in this passage, any directions at all. Hence it follows that the season and the degree of fasting are left to the ordering of the church, and to the decision of each man's own conscience. Hence too we may learn the error of the Roman church, in enacting rules about fasting, so minute and vexatious, as to have brought the ordinance itself into very general disuse.

Viewed justly, as in our own church, fasting is an exercise of the power to controul our appetites. It is "such abstinence" as may help to subdue our "flesh to the spirit." (Liturgy.) And whensoever it is undertaken in earnest, for that end, it will both promote our growth in Christian piety, and be rewarded by our Father which seeth in secret. But for this purpose it must be done in secret; done, at least, without ostentation, without design for it to be seen of men. "Anoint thine head and wash thy face;" that is, appear as usual, make no show of change in your outward dressing. In common with prayer and alms, and every other offering of religious duty, fasting is rendered worse than worthless by being done out of regard to the world's applause. It may be that others many times cannot help but see our good works. This however is quite a different thing from our doing them with a view to their being so seen. No; if we are desirous of glory, let us not be content with the praise of men. But let us remember that we are surrounded with "spiritual witnesses, that angels from above behold our faith, and rejoice over our repentance. And let our motives be all calculated for the praise of that heavenly Father which seeth in secret. So shall He reward us openly; proclaiming before assembled worlds the praise of them, who in all their work, of worship, and of love, aim only at being seen of Him.

Our Lord having thus, in the matter of fasting, struck at the very root of all pride and spiritual conceit, proceeds next to denounce another very grievous evil, namely, covetousness. In order to cure us of this malady, He first points to the perishable nature of all earthly wealth, and contrasts with it the security of treasure in heaven, which He assures us will endure undiminished for ever. This single consideration might serve to take off our fond affection from this world's goods, and to turn our views to the promised riches of eternity. Many times those things we here most covet fail us when most we reckon them our own. In any case we ourselves must at last leave them, leave also the world they belong to, and go to a world where they cannot follow us.

In the next place He reminds us that wheresoever we lay up our treasure, there will our hearts be also. How can we then endure to have the heart confined to earth? How allow that soul, which came forth from God, to be tied down to the gross and vain enjoyments of a world that soon passeth away? How bear to hinder it from soaring to the possession of its native light, to the enjoyment of that heaven, which lost as it has been by sin, we may yet, every one of us, through grace regain?

But, thirdly, this would be as though the very eye, which should enlighten and guide the body, were itself to become dark with blindness. For then should we wander in ignorance and error, trembling when least in danger, and rash when on the verge of destruction, eagerly pursuing trifles of no worth, and heedlessly passing by the pearl of inestimable price. Such is that great spiritual darkness that ensues, when the light which is in us becomes darkness; when the reasonable soul is blind to the truth of things spiritual, is insensible to God's love, and to heaven's value; when it takes for its wealth those treasures which "moth and rust doth corrupt," and "thieves break through and steal." Let us then always endeavour to see clearly and correctly with the eye of the inmost soul; and, fixing it on those things above, which Christ has revealed to our faith, there lay up our treasure, by here serving Him; and there, by here loving Him, set our hearts also.

Christ exhorteth not to be careful for worldly things.

24 ¹ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, ¹ Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

¹ Luke 16. 13.

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

² Luke 12. 22. Ps. 55. 22. 1 Pet. 5. 7.

§ 18. *That we should seek first the kingdom of God.*

That it is impossible to serve two masters is proved by the experience of human affairs. Hence we may better understand, and should more readily admit, that we cannot serve both God and mammon. If then we would escape captivity to this world's lusts, and be in earnest servants of God, we must adopt the Gospel principle, to take no thought, that is, to cherish no painful anxiety, for the comforts and enjoyments of this present life. This lesson we have here inculcated by the testimony of all things that we see around us. The firmament above, the earth below, the grass of the field, and the fowls of the air, proclaim aloud to man the providence of their almighty Maker. What folly then for us, who, by the exertion of our utmost power, can add not one cubit, nay no measure however small, to our stature, what folly, as well as sin, is it in us, to distrust the fatherly care of the God who giveth us our being!

True it is that we have to work, and to provide for ourselves. True it is, that labour is our appointed lot, industry and exertion our bounden duties. But so much the more should we watch, and take heed, lest they become a snare unto our souls, by engrossing that attention, and exciting that anxious thought, which are due only to life eternal. And therefore does our blessed Lord first expose the folly of laying up treasures on earth, by shewing us that we cannot amass them, at once both here and in heaven, any more than we can at once serve two masters. And next He lays bare the very root of covetousness, by bidding us take no thought of the kind for the morrow of this world's brief existence. Sufficient unto us, He argues, is the evil of each present day. Sufficient the trials and difficulties which beset us each hour as it successively arrives. Let us not add to them the apprehension of events which may never happen, of wants which, very probably, we may never feel. Let us bend rather the whole force of our thought to avoid the evil immediately before us, to be found faithful in those trials which each day brings forth. And whenever we would think of more than is yet present, let us carry on our views, beyond the short period of this world's time, to a morrow which never fails, whose sun will never set.

Eternity is before us. To live for ever in the presence of God, in the beholding of his countenance, in the enjoyment of his glory. This is the morrow we might do well to take thought for, to long after, and meditate on continually. Yet it is this, rather than the morrow of the life that now is, which we are apt to leave unprovided for by any care of ours, apt to let take thought for the things of itself! Let us not so pervert the sober calculations of our own understanding, as to neglect, for what we know to be uncertain, that which we are sure will last for ever. Let us not so violate the plain command of Christ, as to be seeking mainly, like the Gentiles, what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed. But considering rather how short is our utmost time, and how uncertain our enjoyment even of one tomorrow more, let us employ diligently each moment as it comes in preparation for that state which has no end.

The way of doing so is here plainly set down. It is to seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" whatever we are doing, to make this our chief business; whatever we have next to do, to do this first of all. To seek the kingdom of God, that is, his future glory, his present grace; and his righteousness, that is, the holiness of life He commands, and the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the provision we have to make. And this is the method we are to take, besides meditating on heaven and desiring it, to labour also after it, by holiness of life. Then shall all these things also be added unto us. In such measure as God knows to be for our good, He will give us the comforts of this world for a time, whilst He reserves for us an inheritance in heaven for ever.

Christ forbiddeth to judge.

1 Judge 'not, that ye be not judged.
 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: 'and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me

pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

¹ Luke 6. 37. Rom. 2. 1.

² Mark 4. 24. Luke 6. 38.

³ Luke 6. 41.

§ 19. *How we may not judge.*

The Gospel in several instances contains precepts which at first sight appear inconsistent with each other; but which on careful comparison serve only so much the better to enforce the one uniform system of Christian truth. For each passage serves as a check in the interpretation of the other, to prevent us from ever applying the words of Scripture in any other sense than that which they were designed to bear. Thus this command that we "judge not" seems at variance with our Lord's instructions to the apostles, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault." Matt. 18. 15. It is opposed also to the direction given afterwards in this chapter, ver. 20, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Nay it seems scarce to be consistent with the very words which follow, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." For ere we obey this precept, we must judge some to be swine and dogs.

This very opposition and seeming variance is however, as was said, well calculated to make plain our line of Christian duty. For the necessity of our judging in some cases, serves to shew us in what cases we are to "judge not." That some men notoriously transgress, that some commit sins which others avoid, and violate obligations which others observe, we cannot fail to be in general aware of. Nor can we help sometimes noticing in individuals those gross instances of misconduct, which exceed the common measure of human iniquity. Our Saviour then would not bid us shut our eyes to the scandal of persons such as these. He would rather have us note their conduct, that we may renounce their principles, and avoid their society. And specially, whilst they continue obstinate in such sinful courses, He forbids us to waste on them the precious pearl of spiritual instruction. That is, we are not to give it them except with caution, and with prospect of success; lest like the dogs and swine whom in their lives they resemble, they should either hurt their instructors, or profane things holy by their scorn and abuse.

And yet even to such as these must we in one sense extend the precept, "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" that is, Judge not of the future eternal condition, judge not rashly of the present spiritual state, of any one among the children of men. We have each enough to do in the examining and judging of ourselves. To cast out the beam that is in our own eye, is ample employment, without our looking after the mote that is in our brother's eye. If we consider how many things we do, which we know we ought not, and how many we leave undone which we know we ought to do, how many good resolves we daily break, how many ways of being better, holier, and more heavenly minded, we heedlessly or even wilfully neglect; if these things we well lay to heart, we shall become too deeply occupied with our own repentance and amendment, to speculate unprofitably on the salvation or condemnation of our neighbours.

Their present actual outward conduct we cannot indeed help beholding. And we do well so far to observe it, as to determine whether we had best seek or avoid their company, to watch when we may offer to them religious exhortation, with best prospect of success instead of scorn. But of their final sentence from that Judge who knoweth the heart, to decide correctly is not in our power; to attempt it is forbidden, is sin. Rather let us hope, even in the worst we know of, that many circumstances, unknown to us, may extenuate, in God's sight, and in their case, conduct which in ourselves we feel would be unpardonable. Rather let us fear, lest our own progress in piety, when estimated by our greater means of improvement, should be counted inferior to theirs. And remembering that there are "last which shall be first," as well as "first which shall be last," Luke 13. 30; let us hope all things of all, see 1 Cor. 13. 7; and desire to mete to all with that measure, with which we would wish to have it measured to us again.

Teach us, O Lord, to judge righteous judgement. See John 7. 24. Teach us to judge ourselves strictly, our neighbours charitably. Teach us to judge, where we must, with mercy. And where we need not, teach us to "judge not" at all.

Christ exhorteth to prayer.

7 ¹ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

12 Therefore all things ² whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

¹ Ch. 21. 22. Mark 11. 24. Luke 11. 9. John 16. 24. James 1. 5, 6.

² Luke 6. 31.

§ 20. *The nature and efficacy of prayer.*

The precepts already considered, in this sermon on the mount, are enough to make the most sanguine of us exclaim with the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" ch. 19. 25. Our righteousness, we are here told, must not only "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," ch. 5. 20, but must have for its aim and rule that we be perfect, even as our "Father which is in heaven is perfect." Ch. 5. 48. Our conduct must be ever directed, not to satisfy the views of those who behold our outward actions, but to please a Father "which seeth in secret." Ch. 6. 4. Our treasure must be laid up where "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." Ch. 6. 20. Our thoughts must be engaged, not by the vain morrow of this world, see ch. 6. 34, but by the distant glories of eternity. And many doubtless are hence tempted to say in their hearts, This burden is too heavy for us, this piety impossible to flesh and blood. Here therefore the divine Teacher encourages us by promising, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There is One to whom all things are possible. And here we find how we may obtain his help. With Him all things will be possible to us also; even for the once sinful heart to bring forth the fruit of holiness; for our flesh to be subdued to the Spirit; for our corrupt affections to be purified by his love; for the soul, however deeply it may have been engrossed with the cares of its earthly sojourn, to desire above all things "to depart and to be with Christ." Phil. 1. 23.

Let us never then, for one moment, shrink from the high standard of Christian duty, on the plea that it is above our reach. Let us not flag in the prescribed course towards perfection, out of a fainthearted distrust of the possibility of attaining it. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8. 31. If we may have help of Him, what is there we need fear to undertake? Hath He not given for us his own Son? and will "he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8. 32, all things good for us? all things necessary for the fulfilment of that duty He hath enjoined, for the attainment of that heaven He hath promised? Shall the earthly parent be found willing to indulge his children in each reasonable request, and can we doubt that our Father which is in heaven will "give good things to them that ask him?" Nay, surely, with his aid, we may prevail. We may accomplish the love both of God and of our neighbour. We may so behave to all the rest of mankind, that whatsoever we would have them do to us, "even so" we shall do unto them.

Let us set before ourselves no less than thus to fulfil the law, the prophets, and the Gospel of Christ. But not, let us remember, not in our own strength. And further, let us remember that if we would have God's help, we must ask, we must seek, we must knock. To ask alone is not to pray. Besides asking with our lips, we must seek; that is, we must use means, use diligent exertion, with the earnest desire of our hearts. And further, we must knock. For in every good we desire there is usually some hinderance, some bar or bolt of difficulty in our way, which would tempt us to relax in our petitions. Here then we must knock with importunity, till stronger hands than ours open to us in due time.

Have we then, any of us, prayed hitherto in vain? But how have we prayed? with faith, nothing doubting? with zeal, nothing failing? with affection, nothing doating on the world we renounce, nothing divided between heaven and earth, God and mammon? Have we felt our necessities? Have we asked as desiring? Have we sought as for a paradise lost by sin? Have we knocked as at a door, guarded by a flaming sword, but leading to the mansions of eternal bliss? If not, no wonder we neither receive, nor find, nor have it opened to us. We have not prayed. If we had, we have God's word for it, we should have been sure to be heard. To say prayers, this is not to pray. To repeat with the lips a devout form of devout words, this is not to pray. To pray is to desire in the heart, to desire of God what He alone can give. It is to put up from the inmost soul, whether with words or without, the offering of a humble dependance on the Giver of all good things. He which "seeth in secret," ch. 6. 6, heareth also in silence; feelth the movement of each contrite soul that draws near in faith unto Himself. Let us, then, whatever prayer we offer, ask believing. For thus hath our blessed Lord elsewhere assured us, ch. 21. 22, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive."

Christ exhorteth to enter in at the strait gate.

13 ¹ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 ¹ *||* Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. ² Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 ³ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, ⁴ Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, ⁵ I never knew you: ⁶ depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

¹ Luke 13. 24.

|| Or, *How*.
² Luke 13. 27.

³ Luke 6. 43.

⁴ Ch. 3. 10.
⁵ Ps. 6. 8.

⁶ Rom. 2. 13. James 1. 22.

§ 21. *The vanity of profession without practice.*

In proportion as the rule of the Gospel is pure and practical, the mind of man being corrupt, is apt to explain away its application and force. Our Lord therefore concludes this plain account of Christian conduct, by warning us how greatly we are in danger of extenuating its solemn obligations. The wide gate, He speaks of, and the broad way, are those various false methods of religion which men have from time to time adopted, instead of the true one; deceiving themselves by the hope, that heaven may be attained by some easier service, than devotion of heart, and holiness of life. The false prophets are they who thus promise "peace; when there is no peace," Jer. 8. 11: who teach men to seek for salvation by means other than that faith in Christ which produces the fruit of good works. These are the corrupt trees that bring forth evil fruit. These are they that cry unto Jesus, Lord, Lord, without doing the will of his Father which is in heaven. These are they who make boast of what they have done in his Name; and yet must receive, notwithstanding, the fearful sentence, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Scarce any kind of false religion has prospered in the world, which does not offer salvation, on terms in some sense easier, than those which the Gospel enjoins. And this is the chief reason why false religions have so generally prevailed. Men love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil. See John 3. 19. All mankind, doubtless, wish to go to heaven. All wish, rather than not, to be happy when they die. But yet many resolve here to enjoy first, as long as may be, the pleasures of sin. Many desire here to avoid, as far as can be, the work of righteousness, the humiliation of faith. To believe in what they cannot here see, to labour for that meat which here they cannot thoroughly enjoy, this they are reluctant to undertake, though it, and it alone, endureth unto everlasting life. Eagerly therefore they close with any false form of religion which pretends to allow their indolence or iniquity, and yet promises to make all right at the last.

Nor is this error confined to the profession of a false religion. In some shape it besets all; even those of us who hold the faith most true, and have been brought up in communion with a church most pure. Many times, and many ways, we are tempted, all of us, to start aside into some broad and easy track, out of the narrow and up hill path of Christian perfection. But when the difficulties of the Gospel thus go nigh to affright us, we should do well on the other hand to consider the difficulties of rejecting the Gospel. Who can "dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33. 14. We are born under sentence of eternal death. At an hour we know not of, we shall be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ. The great points to be then inquired into are our faith and obedience, not in a religion of our own devising, but in that which is set forth in his word. What will it then avail us to have professed his Name? Nothing; unless we have obeyed his will. What to have owned the truth of his Gospel in general? Nothing; unless we have followed it, in its several particulars. Of what use will it then be to us to plead his precious death, if it hath wrought in us no mortifying of the flesh, no effectual dying unto sin? Of what use to glory in his resurrection, if we have never risen again from sin to walk in newness of life?

Never then let us cease to watch against a peril so imminent, against a delusion so fatal to our soul's health. Never let us dare offer to Him who seeth the heart, instead of real inward devotion, any formal outward service, any sacrifice, of mere man's invention. Narrow is the way wherein we have to walk, strait the gate through which we have to enter. Let us be aware that such is the nature of our pilgrimage. And when most we find all things smooth to us, then let us most suspect, that in some point our conscience is asleep, our duty neglected, and our progress towards perfection at a stand. That so we may be neither deluded by the prophets of smooth things, nor by the fair show of trees whose fruit is corrupt: but, finding the true way that leadeth unto life, we may be counted, through the merits and mercy of our Lord, to have done the will of our Father which is in heaven.

Christ teacheth us not to be hearers only but doers of the word.

24 Therefore 'whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, ² the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29 For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

¹ Luke 6. 47.

² Mark 1. 22. Luke 4. 32.

§ 22. *That the Christian life must be built on the foundation of Christ.*

To hear and to do these sayings of Christ is the only way to build on a foundation that will never fail. That foundation is the promise of God; that rock is Christ Himself. He it is, and his death, on which we build; the atonement He made for sin, the covenant He hath sealed for our redemption. The method of our building is faith. For it is by faith that we lay hold of the promises, by faith that we are justified, by faith that we are admitted into the covenant of grace. The building to be raised is holiness of life. It is a heart devout, pure, and charitable. It is a spirit that is in all things purposing to be conformed to the will of God. Against that which is thus fitly framed together in the soul, thus firmly founded on the sufferings of Christ, in vain does the rain descend, the storm of temptation pour. In vain do the floods come, and the winds blow; whether from without they be the snares of the world, or the violence of passion from within. It falls not; for it is founded on a rock. It falls not; for that rock is Christ; and Christ is God.

How foolish then are they, who, on the sand of this world's foundation, build the Babel tower of wealth, of indolence, and luxurious living, of worldly pleasure, or of worldly gain; rearing with vain labour a work that is sure to fall to their destruction! How entirely is it our wisdom to do according to the sayings of our Lord, that so our work may endure for ever! He taught "as one having authority;" as One who had the power to enforce what He commanded, and to fulfil whatsoever He promised. Let not us then, like those who first heard Him, be content with being "astonished at his doctrine." But let us receive it with thankfulness, study it with attention, believe it utterly, and thoroughly obey it. The more we devote ourselves to do so, the more deeply we shall become convinced of its heavenly nature, the more entirely we shall be absorbed in the only one pursuit worthy of our care, the saving of the soul. The higher we advance in this spiritual building, we shall find our sight of truth continually extended, our field of duty widened, and the boundless horizon of perfection ever further and further enlarged, to our anxious and admiring view. So much the more should we rejoice, so much the more stedfastly continue our heaven directed efforts, and press forward to the prize of our high calling. Our toil may be irksome, but God will give us strength; our hazard great, but He will make us safe. The work we have in hand is founded on a rock, and we have his own assurance, that it shall never fall.

This assurance we may apply profitably, if soberly, to the prospect held out to us in Scripture of our own final perseverance. No drawback could be more injurious to our Christian progress than an apprehension that we were likely in the end to perish. Nor can any encouragement to our zeal be more effectual than the conviction that we shall in the end overcome. The enemy therefore of man, the enemy of man's salvation, would fain fill us with misgiving and doubt. He sets before the mind its expected series of many times repeated trials; and suggests the faithless question, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. 3. 4. Thus would he promote our backsliding, by inducing us to despond. Without falling into his other snare of presumption and spiritual pride, let us ever closely lay to heart this encouraging representation of our Lord: "It fell not; for it was founded upon a rock." Let us but be careful to build on Christ, to build with faith, and to build holiness of life; and then we may be sure that what we build shall in no wise fall. His grace is sufficient to make us persevere to the end. A mansion eternal in the heavens awaits our joyful arrival. A house not built with hands, a happiness, a glory no work of ours could earn, is ensured to us by the love of God; who so loved the world, as to give his Son, to the end that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3. 16. He that hath worked will work, if only we work also. He will provide, if only we be not wanting in that which He has put in our own power, He will provide strength unto salvation.

God give us the grace to feel that his "grace is sufficient" for us! 2 Cor. 12. 9. God help us to be not "weary in well-doing." Gal. 6. 9. God make us to know, so far as here we may know, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" 2 Cor. 5. 1.

Christ cleanseth the leper.

1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

2 ¹ And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

3 And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him,

saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that ² Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

¹ Mark 1. 40. Luke 5. 12.

² Levit 14. 4.

§ 23. *The evidence of miracles. Sin the leprosy of the soul.*

The miracles of our Lord form the most striking confirmation of his doctrine. Well might He teach with authority who could heal the sick, cleanse the leper, and raise the dead. This is the first of these signs and wonders which St. Matthew has recorded at any length. Here therefore we may take occasion to consider their great importance, as testimonies to the truth of the Gospel. The great force of the evidence of a miracle consists in this, that it is a thing which could not any how happen naturally. It is something which could not take place in what we call the course of nature, something which could not arise from any other cause, conceivable by man, except the interference of divine power. He who made the world, has formed it subject to certain rules, fixed by Himself, and accessible to the observation of mankind. These rules we call the law of nature. Such for instance are these, that the sun rises and sets, the moon fills and wanes in turn, that the sick lose their strength, and require time to recover it; that different diseases take more or less time in healing, and that some are rarely if ever healed at all; that the living never fail to die; that the dead never return to life. Whatever might happen contrary to such rules as these, we should reckon supernatural. And we reckon it a miracle, when it is so plainly supernatural, as that all men may understand, that it could not have been done, without interference of God. When this is thus acknowledged, when a miracle is thus wrought, we cannot doubt that he who works it has the sanction and authority, if not the power of God Himself. And in this consists the great importance of our Saviour's miracles; they prove the doctrine He taught to be the will of the very same Being who made the world we see around us, and the souls we feel within us. Conceive then of power, such as stretched forth the heavens. Conceive of wisdom, such as knoweth all things that have been, are, and will be. Conceive of goodness, such as made all things to be good, such as filleth all things living, bad as they have themselves become, yet filleth "all things living with plenteousness." Psalm 145. 16. And then consider, that each miracle you read of in the Gospel, proves the Gospels to have come from this same power, and wisdom, and goodness. God it is, the same God, who hath here said unto the soul, as He once did to the world, in its dark estate, "Let there be light, and there was light." Gen. 1. 3.

The case before us is the healing of the leprosy; a disease which was then of common occurrence among the Jews. The whole multitude therefore well knew its nature. They knew that it was a very loathsome and lingering disorder, a disorder which never ceased on a sudden, and which rarely ceased at all, except with life itself. Those, who are well acquainted with the Old Testament, will remember how much is said about the leprosy in the Law of Moses; how all who might be infected with it were to be shut out from society, and were forbidden to hold communication with any one else, until pronounced by the priest to be entirely recovered. They may remember also the words of the king of Israel, when Naaman was sent to him to be healed of his leprosy, how "he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" 2 Kings 5. 7. How high then must have been the esteem in which Jesus was already held, when "there came a leper," one afflicted with this very same disease, "saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He seems to expect at once some divine interference. He does not say, if Thou prayest for help, if Thou givest time, attention, medicine; but, "if thou wilt." And our Lord too, in his reply, confirms this notion, saying, "I will; be thou clean;" shewing that it was of his own will, and power, that the healing took place. So that here we have evidence, both that God interfered, and that Christ was Himself that very God.

Moreover, He "put forth his hand and touched him." This might seem to be violating the Law of Moses; yet did our Lord here fulfil its spirit, for by his touch He imparted health, instead of multiplying disease. Compare this with what is said of Elisha, who, when Naaman applied to him for the cure of his leprosy, would not "strike his hand over the place," 2 Kings 5. 11, as being subject to the Law, which forbade to touch. Jesus acted as being the Giver, the Master of the Law. He healed, not as a minister of healing, but as the Lord of health, and of life.

This, let us remember, is his character, in regard to all the spiritual infirmities of his creature man. The leprosy of our souls is sin. The disease, which separates us from communion with God, is wilful transgression of his laws. And from the history of this miracle we should learn to apply, with faith, for our cure, to Him who alone can say, "I will; be thou clean." No outward purifying can here suffice. With the tears, rather, of repentance, with the offering of a humble and devout spirit; with these let us appear before our great High Priest. His merciful touch will heal our infirmities; and his voice, in the presence of his Father, will pronounce us whole, and clean.

Christ healeth the centurion's servant.

5 ¹ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way: and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

¹ Luke 7. 1.

§ 24. *The proof of the centurion's faith.*

The faith of this centurion spring from a just conception of our Saviour's miraculous power. It was exercised in charity. For he applies in behalf, not of himself, but of his slave, one who was in the most abject state of servitude, and yet even in that state was "dear unto him." Luke 7. 2. Jesus, by way of drawing forth the expression of his faith, replies, "I will come and heal him." Such was the gracious resolution in behalf of fallen man, that brought down the blessed Son from the glory of the Father; "I will come and heal him." Such is the voice of mercy that appeals continually to the conscience of the sinner; "I will come and heal him."

On these words the centurion thus reasons: If I who am under authority can have my own orders readily executed, even in my absence, by those who, in their turn, are under me; how much more certainly shall Christ have his will fulfilled, without his coming, by the ministering spirits who do his pleasure. His faith therefore is expressed in humility: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." He requires no more sensible presence, no more forcible manifestation, of Christ. He teaches us, by his example, to be content with even less of evidence than our Saviour offers. He shews us how to build upon the word of Christ, whether He be present, or absent, whether on earth, or in heaven, a lively assurance of our redemption through his blood.

His praise was, that in all Israel, among those who had so much better preparation for belief, our Lord had not found so great faith as in this stranger of the Gentiles. And hence Christ proceeds to utter that prophecy, of so deep interest to ourselves, that many should come from the different Gentile nations, and sit down with the patriarchs in the enjoyment of the covenant: whilst the children of the kingdom, the people of the Jews, for lack of corresponding faith, should be cast into outer darkness.

But further, to put this faith to a manifest proof, our Lord adds, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Thus the recovery of the servant was to be dependent on the convictions of the master. That these were lively and sincere was proved by the result: "his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." Let us apply now to our own faith this searching test. Let us consider, in regard to those things which we profess to believe, how would it fare with us, if, according as we believe, so it were to be done unto us? How much should we enjoy of the protecting care of Providence, if we had so much of it only as we effectually trust in? How much should we experience of God's love, in preserving our lives, supporting our health, bearing with our neglect, ignorance, and ingratitude, if no more of it were to be extended unto us, than we in our hearts faithfully acknowledge? To what extent, again, would the merits of our Saviour Christ atone for our sins, the grace of the Holy Spirit sanctify our hearts, or the joys of heaven be in the event of death imparted to our souls, if the measure of these blessings were to be determined by the limits of our faith, by the degree in which we feel convinced of their certainty, and assured of their being covenanted to ourselves? Who, after such searching of his heart, dare say, Lord, as I have believed, so be it done unto me? Yet such is, we see, the condition of Christ's heavenly healing; such is the faith He requires in us, if, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, we would sit down in the kingdom of heaven. This faith then let us now seek by prayer, and by meditation on God's word. This faith let us endeavour to shew forth by the constant practice of his will. That so we may be prepared for that day, when, whether we would choose or not, each Christian soul must receive for its last sentence, "as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

Christ healeth Peter's wife's mother; and many others.

14 ¹ And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

16 ² When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he

cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, ³ *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

¹ Mark 1. 29. Luke 4. 38.

² Mark 1. 32. Luke 4. 40.

³ Isaiah 53. 4. 1 Peter 2. 24.

§ 25. *The evil spirit of sin must be cast out by Christ.*

The centurion had justly said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Ch. 8. 8. Yet Jesus, we see, was willing of his own accord to enter the lowly dwelling of his disciple Peter. This had taken place previously; the very next thing, as we learn from St. Mark 1. 29, and from St. Luke 4. 38, the very next thing after our Lord's announcement of his ministry, in the synagogue of Nazareth. We should remark here, that it was the mother of Peter's wife whom our Lord selected for this early miracle. Whence it is plain, not only that St. Peter was, as our church reminds us in the service for matrimony, a married man; but also, that our Lord sanctioned, in him, his being married. So that there remains no excuse for the error and presumption of the Roman church in forbidding even to ordinary ministers the sacred ties of marriage.

"When Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever." Her fever was so severe that she was laid, or confined to her bed. Our Lord no sooner heard of it than "he touched her hand, and the fever left her." In her, and in her son, He could, without any profession of theirs, discern the faith He required. And without any words of his own, He could remove her sickness with a touch. "And she arose, and ministered unto them." Hence we learn that her recovery was instantaneous. She was not, as is natural after a fever, left weak and languid for a time; but she was restored to the full possession of her health and strength, in such a manner as naturally she could not have been, that is to say, miraculously. And further, from her ministering unto them we learn, that our Lord not only entered this humble dwelling, but partook also of the frugal fare prepared for the apostle and his family. Thus did He, in the selfsame hour, give proof of divine power, and of human nature; nourishing in Himself by ordinary means that form of flesh and blood, which in others He by a word relieved from hunger, or by a touch recovered from disease.

In the evening the people brought to Him great numbers both of sick, and of those who were possessed with devils. In regard to the latter, we must suppose that the evil spirits, which watch continually for our destruction, were permitted, at that period, to exercise more than ordinary control over the human race. Instead of having their influence confined to the beguiling of the soul within, they were allowed sensibly to possess the body, to distract it with strange pains, to deform it with violent and frantic gestures, and to defile it with the forced utterance of evil imaginations. And this outward sensible possession by devils we may conceive to have been ordered, at that time, for the more plain and permanent proof of their real agency in the world. Whilst it served also to shew forth the victory of Him, who came to bruise the serpent's head, see Gen. 3. 15, and who, as He Himself declared, "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10. 18.

"And he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick." So that not only in the atoning for our sins, but also in the healing of our sicknesses, He fulfilled the words of Isaiah 53. 4. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Have we then, who, like these believing Galileans, hear the words of this heavenly discourse, have we who daily study them, recorded and enforced in the writings of his apostles, have we, when the even is come, no sickness to present to his healing hand, no evil spirits for his word to cast out? Does not each day produce some sin to be confessed before Him at night? Hath no fever of passion, no heat of a disordered fancy, prevented us from ministering, as largely as we ought, to the good of others, and to the glory of Christ? Hath any evil spirit defiled our hearts with forbidden lusts, deformed our souls with doubt, or care, deceit, or envy, or revenge? Let us bring them to the throne of grace, and there lay them before Him who "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Let us present them with humility nothing excusing, with truth nothing concealing, with faith nothing misgiving. In Him is mercy; and in Him is health. Our sins, if only we believe, our sins are no longer ours. He hath taken them on Himself. O! Himself hath He taken the burden to us intolerable, that we thus relieved might sin no more.

Let us then endeavour henceforth, to live according to his will, in holiness, and righteousness, all the days of our lives. Let us minister unto Christ, by ministering unto those amongst our brethren to whom we can by any means do good. By helping them in their sicknesses, bearing with their infirmities, relieving their wants, and overcoming with good any evil they attempt, let us strive to imitate, however feebly and far off, these instances of our Saviour's boundless love.

Christ stilleth the tempest on the sea.

18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19 ¹ And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

¹ Luke 9. 57.

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

24 ² And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

² Mark 4. 37. Luke 8. 23.

§ 26. *The cost of following Christ.*

We learn from these passages in the conduct of our Lord, how many privations must be cheerfully undergone, what binding engagements must be readily put aside, and what vehement troubles must be faithfully encountered, by those who would really follow Christ. He gives all of us express commandment to depart, as it were, "unto the other side;" to leave the shore where the multitude assemble, the crowded haunts of worldly vanity; and to betake ourselves to that narrow, and nearly empty, path, which He has trod before us. Would we profess, with the scribe here mentioned, our willingness to follow Him whithersoever He goeth? Would we, as this professor seems to have done, hope by such obedience to profit in our worldly advancement? The reply of our Lord informs us, that at least this is not what we should look for; not what we are designedly to work for. In his service we should aim at no preferment of gain, or of worldly comfort; no preeminence of rank or station, no security of rest or sustenance. We must devote ourselves, rather, to share the lot of one, who had not where to lay his head.

Would we excuse ourselves in ease or indulgence, by pleading the duties of social life? Would we entreat that, ere we thus strictly follow Christ, we may be allowed first, as this other disciple asked, to bury a father or a friend? to perform these or any other kindly offices, towards each other, to such extent, as might interfere with any higher duty we owe to God? "Follow me," is the answer, "and let the dead bury their dead." Even the sacred rites of burial must give way, the indulgence of our most natural feelings in honouring the remains of those we love, and yet more, that attention to the settling of their affairs, which is perhaps here chiefly meant; even these must be relinquished, were they likely in any way to hinder the following of our Saviour Christ, in the discharge of any paramount Christian duty. How much more then must we regulate by his will all our ordinary social behaviour; and so far only engage ourselves in the business of the world, and in the interesting connexions of this present life, as may be consistent with our devotion to his supreme command! How freely must we give up, at his bidding, the plans we most fondly cherish, the engagements we may have most eagerly desired! And in all this subjection to his will, how deeply should we feel convinced, that He both best knows what is good for us, and kindly gives us that which is the best!

Not that, even when we are resigned to these privations, and walk cheerfully in the direction which his word and will point out; not that thus even we ought fondly to expect, that we may pass over the waters of life, in a course that is continually smooth. He is, it is true, in the ship with us. He is present, by his providence, in the world; by his grace, in the church. He is in the ship with us; but often, to our weak apprehension, He is, as it were, asleep. He interferes not even in our behalf outwardly or sensibly; nor always promptly, forcibly, and uniformly. Meantime the tempest is permitted to arise, the wicked to prosper, Satan to bear rule in the ocean of this wide world, and to cover with the waves of persecution, or of yet more perilous corruption, that vessel, the church, in which we are embarked. When most these perils beset the soul, let us none the less have faith in the power of our ever present Lord. Let us wait patiently his good time for our deliverance; lest otherwise, ere He rebuke the storm, He should reprove first our frailty, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

"Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Then; that is, when they had earnestly besought Him, saying, "Lord, save us, we perish." If therefore we wait with humble patience, let us wait also with earnest prayer. Let us beg of Him, whom the winds and the sea obey, that He will allay every storm of passion, give rest in each trouble of life, and deliver the soul, in its extreme affliction, from the danger and apprehension of final wreck. Let us cast on Him all our care. Let us repose in Him all our trust. Let us direct diligently our course by the compass of his word. And then, whatever storms arise, whatever waves surround us, though our outward condition be chequered with disaster, or even our spiritual course be perplexed with difficulty and distress; yet shall we, at length, enjoy within, a great and lasting calm.

Christ driveth the devils out of the possessed. They go into the swine.

28 ¹ And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying; What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

¹ Mark 5. 1. Luke 8. 26.

§ 27. *How all evil spirits are under the control of Christ.*

That the demoniacs should dwell among tombs, and by their violence molest all who would pass that way, may help to teach us two things of those who are the servants of Satan; the first, how mischievous they are to all around them, and the other, how near akin they are themselves to the dead. Dead indeed they are in trespasses and sins; dead to all good works; dead to the motions of God's Holy Spirit. In vain to them his Gospel sounds; they hear it not. In vain does its glorious light shine forth; they see it not. In vain is his boundless love daily made manifest within their reach; they feel it not. They are poisoned by some unholy pleasure. They are slain by some forbidden lust. And whilst they are themselves thus like unto the dead, their influence is at the same time most injurious to the living. They suffer no man, without harm, to pass that way. Either they do real violence, on purpose to annoy; Satan shewing most readily his spite against mankind, in the making them spiteful to each other. Or else they entice others into the like sins with their own; it being common to all, who do things worthy of death, to have "pleasure in them that do them." Rom. 1. 32.

And further, in the history of this miracle, we should observe of these evil spirits, that though they confessed our Lord to be the Son of God, they complained of his molesting them, before what they counted their time. "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God; art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Thus many also of mankind, in their folly, seem to think that, in this world at least, they are entitled to a full share of sinful pleasure. Having braved the torments of eternity, they reckon on practising securely, for these few score years, whatsoever height of iniquity they please. Here however they might learn, how entirely they depend on Almighty power for each moment's continuance in their wicked course. If then you would any of you sin wilfully, if, in any single instance, you would deliberately barter your eternal happiness for this life's enjoyment; remember, ere you strike the fatal bargain, that Satan, to whom you would thus sell your soul, cannot himself secure you his pretended wages. God who permits evil, for good to us unknown, God, though He permit you for a time to sin, may, long before the time you reckon on, think fit to cut you off; and in the very hour of your projected pleasure, may announce to your dismay, that it is the hour for death and judgment.

Without the divine permission the evil spirits could not even enter into a herd of swine. In the violent death, to which they at once brought these animals, we see how fiercely and utterly, in our helplessness, they would destroy both body and soul, but for the aid of the same mighty Saviour. It is through his mediation that their wrath is stayed, their violence restrained. Through Him, is held out to man the hope, that they may even be cast out from the heart, which has been once taken captive at their will. Let us beware, when we have opportunity of grace so great, let us beware lest we lose it, like these Gergesenes; who thought only of the loss of their swine, and who rudely request our Lord to depart out of their coasts. What else than this do we, if we receive blessings without thankfulness, or chastisement without resignation? if one hour we pray to be delivered from evil, and the next long to be indulged in it? if, whilst we profess to have at heart the welfare of others, we are all the while concerned chiefly for our own? Is not this like grudging the loss of the herd, instead of rejoicing in the recovery of the possessed? Is it not like beseeching the Lord in our hearts, beseeching Him to depart out of our coasts? Such sin if you would avoid, receive with gladness every correction, every means of improvement, God dispenses for your good. Whatsoever it may cost you in loss of worldly goods, rejoice at every occasion to grow in grace. Whether it be sorrow or sickness, whether disappointment or distress, whatsoever you may suffer in this life for Christ's sake, remember always it is not worthy to be compared with the sufferings of eternity, with the loss of the immortal soul.

Christ healeth one sick of the palsy.

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

5 For whether is easier, to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, *Arise, and walk*?

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

8 But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

1 Mark 2. 3. Luke 5. 18.

§ 28. *Sin the palsy of the soul; how it is to be healed.*

Our Lord, we read in the last chapter, 8. 28, "rebuked the winds and the sea," and they obeyed Him. He was able too, as we learn elsewhere, ch. 14. 25, to walk on the waters, whithersoever He would. Here however, we see, He enters into a ship; passing over, in the ordinary manner, to Capernaum, the city where He dwelt. See Matt. 4. 13. He was content to use the common means of conveyances, and to have no further recourse to miracles than was needful for the conviction of mankind. Living, as we do, far from the time when miracles were wrought, we may hence learn to be the better satisfied without beholding them. It is enough for us to know that they once took place. It is our duty, to derive no less deep impression of our Saviour's power, from the settled ordinances of religion, than if we could see Him now walking on the waves of the sea.

"And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." An effectual faith was doubtless here discerned by Christ, in the sick man himself, as well as in those who brought him. And the words, with which the healing was announced, were graciously adapted to fill him, and them, and us, with the cheerfulness of spiritual joy. For, that sin may in any way be forgiven is the most encouraging of all tidings to a sinner. But near to them stood certain of the scribes, more ready from what they heard to frame objections, than to derive any profitable instruction. They said therefore within themselves, "This man blasphemeth." Thus easy is it for a perverse disposition to turn the sweet tidings of redeeming love into the gall of controversy and contention! Our Lord first proves to them that He knew these their secret thoughts; asking, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" He then puts it to themselves, whether the one thing were not as easy as the other, to forgive sins, or to make the sick man arise and walk; meaning that both were alike easy to God, and that through God alone could either of them be done. And lastly, by way of making it manifest that He could do either, He "saith to the sick of the palsy, *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.* And he arose, and departed to his house." The forgiveness of sins could not be seen, and the scribes therefore might make bold to question it. The rising up of the sick man, the recovery of his strength, the taking up of his bed, and the walking to his house, these things they could not deny to have taken place. The conclusion could not be resisted, that his word which was thus fulfilled in one case, would be fulfilled also in the other; that the Son of man had "power on earth to forgive sins."

* Sin is indeed the palsy of the soul; and its nature may be aptly illustrated from some particulars of this complaint, as it afflicts the body. It happens commonly with the paralytic, that when they would move a limb in one direction, it goes the contrary way. Closely does this resemble that state so familiar to the conscience of the sinner, "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do." Rom. 7. 19. Let those, who are now sensible of this law in their members, rejoice to know, that with Christ it is alike easy to say, "Arise, and walk," or, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Here He can enable us to do what is right; and hereafter pronounce pardon on what we have done wrong. The one is the great pledge and condition of the other. The belief, that there is mercy with God through Christ, is the chief Gospel encouragement in well doing. And the grace also which He imparts for our help in walking uprightly, is the true earnest of his design to forgive. We believe Him to have died to save us, therefore we have hope through his blood. In that hope we obey, through grace. And the testimony of conscience, the consciousness that we of his mercy have grace to obey, is our best ground of assurance that we shall in the end be saved.

Christ calleth Matthew ; justifieth his disciples in not fasting.

9 'And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physieian, but they that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, 'but sinners to repentance.

14 Then came to him the disciples of Johu, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

¹ Mark 2. 14. Luke 5. 27. ² Hos. 6. 6. ch. 12. 7. ³ 1Tim. 1. 15. ⁴ Mark 2. 18. Luke 5. 33. ⁵ Or, raw, or, unwrought cloth.

§ 29. *Forgiveness of sins on repentance and amendment of life.*

St. Matthew was called to be an apostle, from sitting "at the receipt of custom." This signifies to us, that he was, as he elsewhere tells us of himself, chap. 10. 3, a publican, or tax gatherer. For all taxes and customs, due to the government, used to be farmed, or let out, to certain persons called publicans; who, paying a fixed rent for them, made the larger profit, the more they could collect. Thus they were often tempted to be guilty of extortion. And whether guilty of it or not, they were liable to have it imputed to them by the people. And they were accordingly very generally disliked. Yet from this obnoxious class did our Lord select one of his own immediate followers. And further, He allowed many others of the same description, to sit at meat with Him in the house. Hereupon the Pharisees took offence, asking, "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" The disciples too of John the Baptist were surprised at our Lord's partaking of this feast. And in somewhat of the same spirit, they asked, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"

The answers of our Lord to both these questions may be the better understood by being viewed in connexion. "They that be whole need not a physieian, but they that are sick." Therefore He disdained not the company of sinners, because it was to heal, and to save sinners that He came down from heaven. If then his coming was for an end so gracious, it was fitting for his disciples to rejoice in his presence, all the while He continued amongst them. Herein He was as a bridegroom, as one bound on a joyful errand, as one come to unite with Himself, his spouse, the church, in the bands of redeeming love. It well beseemed that chosen company, who were privileged to behold his coming, that they should, in his presence, neither mourn nor fast. His dispensation was new, and therefore unfit to be mixed up with the severe ordinances of the elder covenant. Even as a piece of new cloth would not suit for filling up the rent in an old garment. His doctrine, his precepts, and the pattern of his conduct, were altogether of a more high and heavenly kind than those which the Pharisees referred to. Their method therefore was no more fit to regulate his, than old bottles, such as were then used, of more perishable materials than now, would be fit to contain new wine.

In nothing is the dispensation of the Gospel more distinct from that of the Law, than in the explicit promise of forgiveness, set forth through Christ, to contrite sinners. This notion had indeed been beforehand shadowed forth by the prophets. Thus Hosea had said both of God's dealings, and of man's duties, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice." Hos. 6. 6. And Daniel 9. 9. had in like manner proclaimed, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." Thus the minds of their readers might have been prepared to expect, that in some way, though they knew not how, the vengeance due to sin might be appeased. It was reserved, however, for the Author of salvation Himself, to make plain the welcome tidings; and to invite all into his fold by those gracious words, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." When all strictness of ceremonial law had been tried in vain, it was the voice of the bridegroom that brought to frail man, the joyful tidings of forgiveness, through his own most precious blood. All are sinners; all therefore He called. And all whom He called He called to repentance, even that from sinners they should become righteous. All are sinners. Only all know not their sins. Only some there are that trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. Let not us then say that we have no sin, lest we deceive ourselves, and the truth be not in us. See 1 John 1. 8. Neither let us be content with merely owning that we are sinners, without obeying also the invitation to repentance. For so only may we rejoice with the heavenly Bridegroom, if we presume not on his mercy, to continue in sin, but take it for our great motive to amendment of life; if, the more freely He offers to forgive, the more sincerely we aim to have the less to be forgiven.

Christ cureth the issue of blood ; raiseth from death the ruler's daughter.

18 ¹ While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead : but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

19 ² And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment :

21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw

her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

24 He said unto them, Give place : for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

26 And || the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

¹ Mark 5. 22. Luke 8. 41.

|| Or, *this fame.*

§ 30. *That the Christian is not dead, but sleepeth.*

In the healing of the woman here mentioned, it was not her touching the garment of our Saviour, but faith that made her whole. And this faith is within our reach. And although, since the ascension of Christ into heaven, we enjoy not the like privilege of touching, or beholding Him, we should rejoice to think, that nevertheless we have access to the benefits of his heavenly healing. Let us then be firmly persuaded that in Him is a divine virtue to remove all our infirmities. Weak though we be, He can make us strong ; sinful, yet He can make us righteous. Though many years our frailty may have troubled us, and our evil habits long constrained us to transgress, yet may we lay hold of the garment of his grace, with full assurance that there our issue of sin will be stopped. His robe is mercy, faithfulness, and truth. Let us learn from this woman at once to think lowly of ourselves, and to think all things possible with Him. Let us approach Him with humility, in proportion to our unworthiness, with liveliness of faith, according to his power. And then though we neither see that face which "turned about" to her in mercy, nor hear that gracious voice, which said, "Daughter, be of good comfort," yet may we enjoy a conviction, abundantly sufficient, that our faith, through Him, hath made us whole.

This miracle took place whilst our Lord was on his way to the ruler's house, whose daughter was "even now dead." On his arrival, observe how readily He left his conference with the Pharisees, and disciples of John, that He might attend to the application of the ruler. Controversy with gainsayers may be sometimes necessary, and conversation with friends many times profitable ; but either of them we ought readily to break off, when an occasion offers to do good to the distressed. On the arrival of our Lord at the ruler's house, He "saw the minstrels and the people making a noise." These were mourners, uttering a lamentation, according to the custom of the country, over the young woman's decease. By way of preparing them for her restoration to life, "He said unto them, Give place ; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth." In these words we may conceive Him to have intimated somewhat of what death is to Christians, when tempered by his healing hand. "And they laughed him to scorn." Being quite certain that the young woman was truly dead, they made light of Christ's words, which they understood to mean literally, that she was only asleep. He however went in ; and "took her by the hand, and the maid arose."

True then were his words, in the sense He meant ; true were they proved to the beholders ; and to us, whom they most deeply concern, full of grace no less than truth. For this much we may learn from them for our comfort, that death under the control of our blessed Lord, is, unto all them that believe in Him, only as the repose of sleep. Weary with the arduous course of duty, the Christian lies down in the grave, as in the enjoyment of his needful rest. He works, whilst life lasts, the work given him to do. He performs with diligence his appointed task. He runs with patience the race that is set before him. He submits to its hardships with resignation. And thankfully he partakes of the manifold blessings, whether of health, or wealth, of good character, or of social affection, that attend him on his way rejoicing. But as the day advances, and when it is now far spent, it is no cause of grief to him to think that the night is near at hand. It is the period he has looked to for his rest. The evening closes round his head, either gradually, if life is prolonged, or early, it may be, as with the ruler's daughter, in the term of his natural existence. Whensoever under Providence his hour may arrive, he takes leave without repining of all that most here he loves, and enters the valley of the shadow of death, with an entire dependance on the mercy of God, in all that most there he fears. He "is not dead, but sleepeth." He rests in Christ. He waits with Christ for the appointed day, when He shall put all enemies under his feet. See 1 Cor. 15. 25. Meantime, if time there any longer be to those who are departed from this world of sense, visions of things heavenly are imparted to his soul. He "is not dead, but sleepeth." He is awakened by the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh !" Matt. 25. 6. Then shall the Lord take him by the hand, and he shall arise ; not to a state of trial, but to a crown of victory ; to a heaven where there shall be neither toil nor sleep, but life perpetual, and at God's right hand "pleasure for evermore." Psalm 15. 12.

Christ healeth two blind men, and one that was dumb.

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, *According to your faith be it unto you.*

30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly

charged them, saying, *See that no man know it.*

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

32 ¹ As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, *It was never so seen in Israel.*

34 But the Pharisees said, ² He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

¹ Luke 11. 14.

² Ch. 12. 24. Mark 3. 22. Luke 11. 15.

§ 31. *Through faith our eyes are opened and our tongues loosed.*

In the case of these blind men, we may observe of true faith, how much more it depends on the inward disposition than on any mere outward advantages. They were not able to see the miracles which Christ had wrought. They were less likely, therefore, to be struck with any lively conviction of his divine authority. Yet, blind as they were, they persevered in following Him, and were the first to address Him by the title of the Messiah, "Thou son of David?" That there might be no doubt of their being actuated by true faith, our Lord asks, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" He then adds, by way of reward as well as proof, "According to your faith be it unto you." "And their eyes were opened." So valuable in his sight is that humility, and love of truth, which prepared these blind men, as we may hope, to believe! So sure is the progress of true faith, from weakness to strength, and from strength to more strength, and to brighter vision!

For thus is it also with the spiritually blind, under the healing influence of Christ's heavenly touch. At first they have as afar off to cry, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." For a while they do but as in the dark feel after Him, if haply they may find Him. See Acts 17. 27. But in proportion to the vigour and sincerity of these their first efforts, their eyes are gradually more opened, and their sight becomes more bright; until at length they shall behold, "face to face," 1 Cor. 13. 12, the gracious countenance of that Lord, in whom, not seeing Him, they believed. Here indeed, whilst on earth, even they who best see are but as blind. The most clear conceptions we can form of God's mercy, and of our Saviour's love, are but as a dim and dark shadow, compared with the real enjoyment of them hereafter in heaven. Here too we all are, as it were, dumb. The prayers, and praises, of the most devout worshipper, are alike unworthy of the mercies for which they are put up, and of the majesty of that Being, to whom they are addressed. The same evil spirits, who were permitted in times past sensibly to bind the tongue in dumbness, inflame now that offending member, with false, haughty, angry, or malicious words; and prevent it also, by distractions of thought, or worldliness of heart, from uttering aright the language of devotion. But He, who then cast them out, still offers, through the grace of his Holy Spirit, that both tongue and heart shall be enlarged in his service; shall be loosed from the bands of each sinful habit, from the possession of each evil spirit, whether it be the demon of pride, or of ill temper, of impurity, covetousness, or uncharitableness.

Thus will gradually be fulfilled amongst ourselves, in a high and spiritual sense, that prophetic description of our Saviour's power, Isa. 35. 5, 6, "the eyes of the blind shall be opened," "and the tongue of the dumb sing." Here, even on earth, shall we have clearer and clearer before our eyes the evidence of things heavenly, the fear of God, the love of Christ. Here shall our voice, however faint in prayer, be lifted up with more and more fervour, and be heard with more of approbation by our Father which is in heaven. Here shall the tongue, that was dumb in sin, be sanctified both in the constant practice of devotion, and in the hourly utterance of a pure, charitable, and edifying conversation. Hereafter, when the body shall be glorified, when the eye shall no more "see darkly," 1 Cor. 13. 12; the tongue also shall be inspired to join in strains unknown on earth, even to sing "the song of the Lamb." Rev. 15. 3. Whilst the sight, in some manner we know not, shall behold the things that are invisible, the voice also, in some method we cannot comprehend, and with feelings of joy which we cannot conceive, shall proclaim unto Him that sitteth on the throne, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4. 11.

Christ hath compassion on the multitude.

35 ¹ And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 ² But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they ³ fainted, and were scattered abroad, ⁴ as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, ⁵ The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

38 Pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

¹ Mark 6. 6. Luke 13. 22.

² Mark 6. 34.

³ Or, were tired and lay down.

⁴ Num. 27. 17.

⁵ Luke 10. 2.

§ 32. *That we must bring in our fellow creatures to the knowledge of Christ.*

Jesus, "when he saw the multitudes," "was moved with compassion on them." The mass of mankind, as they labour under ignorance and want, may be objects of scorn to the worldly mind; but by the enlightened Christian, as by his divine Master, they must be viewed with affectionate concern. The more he has been raised above the multitude, by birth, wealth, education, or any other means; the more he must make allowance for their infirmities, the more he must desire to relieve their necessities, to respect their rights, and to improve, in all things, their condition.

That these multitudes should be compared to sheep having no shepherd, may seem strange, when at the very time Jesus Himself was going about amongst them, "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people." It was in his power, no doubt, to have supplied every want of all, from his own divine abundance. But it is his will, that, under Himself and his providence, we should depend on each other for every blessing we enjoy. And He represents people without preachers as sheep without a shepherd, that his followers might be the more inclined to profit by that ministry, to which his church should be afterwards committed. He said therefore to his disciples, that is, to the whole multitude of those who now believed on Him, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." Great, that is, are the numbers, who might, by due care and attention, be brought into the kingdom of heaven; but few are they who are employed in the good work. Apply yourselves therefore in prayer, and, by all other means in your power, promote the sending forth of more labourers into this spiritual harvest.

Here we see how great is our obligation to assist, both at home, and also abroad, in forwarding the diffusion of Christian knowledge. To our own times, to our own country, to our own neighbourhood, to our own parish, we may justly apply these words, "The harvest truly is plenteous." Millions there are in far distant lands, to whom the very name of the Gospel is unknown; millions, by whom it is known only in scorn. Thousands there are, many thousands it is to be feared, in our own Christian community, who have no saving knowledge of their Saviour Christ, no effectual faith in his merits, no comfortable hope in his mercy. For these, let us pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers, that He would gather them into his fold, that He would make them his own for ever. Prayer for our fellow creatures is within the power of all. But in order to pray effectually, we must desire fervently. Let us see then that we feel, in behalf of our brethren, a fervent desire that they may be saved. Such a desire will prompt us, besides praying, to contribute also from our means, however scanty they may be, some help towards the furtherance of these objects. "Preachers of the Gospel cannot be sent out to foreign countries without great cost. Nor can the word of God be dispersed widely amongst the poor at home, without a large and corresponding expense. For such purposes, therefore, societies have been formed, which collect the contributions of many single persons, and apply them to advance the common object." In giving to them, let us take pains always so to give, as to do the most good that our means admit of. And let us prefer those plans and societies, which, with the least admixture of human infirmity, seem likely to promote, as far as we can judge, the largest possible amount of Christian knowledge.

Nor is it enough that we give bountifully, to the most excellent public associations we can meet with, for the furtherance of religion. We must regard also our own lives, in private, as responsible for the effect they produce on others. We must remember that, according as we ourselves set up to, or fall short of, our Christian profession, we shall win also others to the faith, or bring it into discredit and disgrace. There is nothing that so much hinders the growth of Christianity, either among the heathen, or in our own country, as the notorious offences, the scandalous diversions, the acknowledged worldliness of mind, prevalent among those who profess to be Christ's. So neither are there any means more sure to forward his heavenly harvest, than that piety of heart, that conformity of our life to our calling, which are alike within the reach of all. These things let us aim to do, whilst we pray that his kingdom come. Whilst we beseech Him that his harvest may be speedily gathered in, let us forward it, and help in it ourselves. And so may we here enjoy the thought that we have aided in the salvation of our brethren; and be summoned hereafter, as faithful labourers, to receive the wages of eternal life.

Christ sendeth out his twelve apostles.

1 And 'when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power || *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son of* Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son of* Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 'But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

9 '|| Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.

10 Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; 'for the workman is worthy of his meat.

11 'And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when ye come into an house salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let *your* peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 'And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

¹ Mark 3. 14. Luke 9. 1.

|| Or, over.

² Acts 13. 46.

³ 1 Tim. 5. 18. Luke 10. 7.

⁶ Luke 10. 8.

⁵ Luke 10. 9.

⁴ Mark 6. 8.

Luke 9. 3. & 22. 35.

|| Or, Get.

⁷ Mark 6. 11.

⁸ Acts 13. 31.

§ 33 *The commission of the apostles instructive to ourselves.*

This chapter contains the instructions given to the apostles, when they were first sent out to preach the Gospel. It relates therefore to their office, as inspired teachers, having authority to work miracles in support of what they taught.* Yet neither in these, nor in any other of our Saviour's words, shall we fail to find abundant matter, to interest, and instruct also, ourselves.

First, we observe "he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." He had then this power in Himself, in such manner as that He could confer it on others; differing herein from all former prophets, and leading us hereby to consider, what is elsewhere very plainly set down, that He was no other than God Himself. And next, of those to whom the power was thus given, as we have already seen that some were poor fishermen, and Matthew himself a publican: so it is known also of the rest who are here mentioned, that they were men of no rank, or wealth, or learning. And the more humble are seen to be the instruments which "turned upside down," Acts 17. 6, the heathen world, the more forcibly are we compelled to admit that "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." Psalm 118. 23.

They are directed to "go not into the way of the Gentiles," but "rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." So faithfully did the Almighty fulfil his covenant with the chosen people! So entirely will He, in like manner, make good his promises, no less gracious, to the children of the faith of Abraham, the called according to his purpose, in all ages and nations of the world. Only let us be duly sensible that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." Only let not us, through our own unbelief, fall short of his proffered mercy; or fail to receive freely, that is, gladly, thankfully, that grace which is freely, that is, bountifully, given.

The apostles were to make no earthly provision for their journey. This was that they might better put to the proof the kindness of those whom they addressed. And further, their own faith must have been daily confirmed, by the support they thus experienced from the hand of God. "The workman is worthy of his meat." Hence they who labour may well trust, that industry in their work will lead usually to a competent provision. Hence they also, who use the labour of their fellow creatures, must infer the duty of providing for their wants. And especially is here enforced the obligation which lies on all who hear the Gospel, that they contribute to the support of those who preach it. Nor is supporting them enough. To hear their words, that is, to attend to their exhortations, appears from this passage to be the bounden duty of every Christian. "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet."

Our Lord from the very first made use of human helps for the spreading abroad his Gospel in the world. He preferred, as we here see, to other, and more heavenly means, the preaching and the healing of these twelve apostles. This may make us the less surprised, that beings so frail as man, a ministration so imperfect as any man can perform, should still be used by the Almighty in the edification of the church. "We have," saith the apostle, and so must say all ministers, "this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Cor. 4. 7. And the reason he thus adds, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The frailties then of God's ministers, such as they necessarily have in common with their brethren, should be no impeachment to the message they are appointed to enforce. And the ordinance should lead us, on the contrary, to admire the wisdom of that great and good Being who out of weakness can bring forth strength, out of labours so faint and frail as ours, can forward the salvation of mankind.

Christ comforteth his apostles under expected persecution.

16 ¹ Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and ^{||} harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 ² But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 ³ And the brother shall deliver up the brother to

death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: 'but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not ^{||} have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

24 ⁴ The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call them of his household?*

¹ Luke 10. 3.

^{||} Or, end, or, finish.

^{||} Or, simple.

² Mark 13. 11. Luke 12. 11.

³ Luke 6. 40. John 13. 16.

⁴ Luke 21. 16.

⁴ Mark 13. 13.

§ 34. *Motives to patience in affliction and to perseverance in well doing.*

The directions which are here given to the apostles, in regard to the fear of men, may serve as well as the rest of this discourse for the improvement of all faithful Christians. Are not we too, if at least we serve Christ truly, are not we to dwell in the midst of a worldly multitude "as sheep in the midst of wolves?" returning good for evil, blessing for cursing, and love for persecution? Is it not our duty, in all intercourse we hold with the rest of mankind, to be, at once, "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?" to do no hurt to others, either directly or in the way of example? and to watch prudently, lest in ourselves we contract harm from them? Thus too we, as well as the apostles, must "beware of men;" must be on our guard against the wiles of the wicked. And into whatsoever difficulties or dangers we are brought for conscience sake, we should consider that we have in heaven a Father, who careth for us, whose blessed Son pleadeth for us, whose Holy Spirit speaketh ever, if not in us, yet for us, "with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. 8. 26. Seldom are we in danger of being delivered up, and brought as were the apostles, for Christ's sake, before governors and kings. But in many things we run risk, lest through fear of man, of man's ridicule for instance, or scorn, or anger, we be tempted to do what we know to be wrong, or to neglect what we know to be right. Whosoever such a temptation occurs, let us call to mind the motives, here suggested by our Saviour, against the fear of man's persecution.

First, though brother should rise up against brother, parent against child, or child against parent, nay, though it were our apprehension to be hated of all men for the sake of Christ; we have for our consolation this divine assurance, "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." However long be the race that is set before us, it must at length be finished. However many may be our trials, the end at last is sure; that end, if only we endure, the salvation of the soul.

Or, secondly, does the time seem tedious? the interval too long? is our patience weary? does our courage fail? Mark then this next topic of consolation, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." This we may thus apply to ourselves. The work appointed us requires that we should thus long continue under trial. Our heavenly Master has service for us to perform, until the time when his summons shall arrive. For the apostles, that service was to go over the cities of Israel, teaching and healing. For us, it is to honour Him by holiness in ourselves, and to do good in our generation to all mankind. Life is not vanity, where it may be thus employed. It need never be vexation of spirit, where it may be spent for ends so excellent, and in a manner so full of satisfaction, as in doing good to our fellow creatures, and in exercising, out of fear towards God, humility, charity, and faith, in ourselves.

Would we still repine as being subject to so many pains and perils in our Christian warfare? Let us call to mind then, thirdly, what contradiction of sinners, what desertion, and scorn, and ignominy, our Lord Himself endured. Let us consider that "it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." He suffered for us, "the just for the unjust." 1 Pet. 3. 18. Much more then should we suffer for Him, the unjust for the just, out of regard to his will. And there should be no greater comfort to us, in the very worst we have here to undergo, than to know, that herein we may become like unto Christ, if we suffer patiently, cheerfully, thankfully. Let us not then be disheartened either by the fear of man, or by apprehension of the pains, and weariness, and sorrow which this life usually presents. The more we have to bear, the more gladly let us suffer; the more to do, the more devoutly let us work. We cannot have either so much to do, or so much to bear, for Christ's sake, as He graciously condescended, both to do, and to endure, for us, and for our deliverance from eternal death.

Christ continueth his instructions to the apostles.

26 Fear them not therefore: *for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

28 *And* fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a || farthing? and

¹ Mark 4. 22. Luke 8. 17. & 12. 2. ² Luke 12. 4.
of the Roman penny. ³ 2 Sam. 14. 11. Acts 27. 34.

one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

30 *But* the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

32 *Whosoever* therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 *But* whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

It is in value halfpenny farthing in the original, as being the tenth part
⁴ Luke 12. 8. ⁵ Mark 8. 38. Luke 9. 26. 2 Tim. 2. 12.

§ 35. Further arguments against the fear of man.

Here we find further topics of encouragement, set forth to the apostles, in their preaching of the Gospel. And we may proceed to apply them to our own support, in the practice of what they preached. True Christian practice leads us often, as we have already observed, to encounter difficulties, privations, and pain. And sometimes, perhaps, we are disheartened at the thought, that no one regards our suffering, or gives us credit for our patient endurance. Let us consider then, that God always seeth us; and that, by his sure decree, "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known." The perseverance of the faithful, as well as the falling away of the wicked, shall be brought to light, at the last day. This truth is further insisted on in what follows, as to Christ's confessing, and denying those, who confess, or deny Him.

But first He gives us another argument against unworthy fear, another ground of fortitude in the fulfilment of our duty. He points out to us, for this end, the distinction between the body and the soul. "Fear not," saith He, "them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Is it then for the body that we fear? In any duty we have to do, are we afraid lest it might interfere with the comforts and conveniences which the body enjoys? Would we, rather than lose this world's goods, venture on any known sin? Would we rather than brave the ill will of men, speak falsehood, or do wrong; neglect the duties of religion, or suspend the progress of the soul to heaven? If in any such way we are tempted to transgress, out of fear, or deference to them, who at the utmost could but kill the body; let us reflect how little this concerns us, compared with the well being of the soul. Let us learn rather to "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." His providence, we should observe, preserveth even the birds of the air; numbereth even the hairs of our heads. He therefore is most near to us, in all that we can fear. Nor can any one have power, in any way, against us, unless it be given of Him. If it be power we are afraid of, what power is so great as his? if anger, what wrath so fierce? Or if kindness weighs rather in our minds, and we are tempted to do evil in order to gratify the friends we love, or those who have first loved us; what so great goodness can we think of, what mercy ought we to be so much afraid of not being duly thankful for, as that which shines forth in the redemption of mankind, by the precious blood of our Saviour Christ?

And here we have one more argument against an unworthy fear, one more ground of that holy courage, which, through the fear of God, sets at nought the world, the flesh, and the Devil. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." When the books shall be opened, and the judgment set; when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, then shall they of a certainty be exposed to shame, who have through fear of scorn, done evil; and they who have, for Christ's sake, despised shame, shall be exalted in honour by Himself. Our future sentence, whether of praise or blame, whether of reward or punishment, will be pronounced in a most public and full assembly. Which, out of us all, would now like to have his heart laid open to those who sit around him? Who but must be conscious of many things within, which he would be ashamed to have proclaimed to his nearest friends? Let us then repent and amend, that our sins may be blotted out; or sure we may be, all these things will soon be as clearly seen, as fully known to others, as is our outward bearing in this present world. Nor is it only evil that will be then made known. Our more holy thoughts, our more kindly feelings, the good purposes we should be ourselves reluctant to profess, and the patience with which we have borne, in privacy, any pain or sorrow for Christ's sake; these also will He hereafter make manifest, confessing us for his own, before our Father which is in heaven.

God make us to be not "afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass!" Isaiah 51. 12. God work in us that reverent apprehension of Himself, which, raising the soul above all other fear, may enable us, by a holy life, and by an edifying conversation, to confess Christ before men! God give us the true Christian courage to resist the Devil, and to renounce the world; to speak, in season, the unwelcome truth; to brave when needful, the undeserved rebuke; to dare to give offence, rather than deceive; rather than sin, to die!

Conclusion of the instructions given to the apostles.

34 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance ¹against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household.

37 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 'And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39 'He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

40 'He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

¹ Luke 12. 51.

² John 12. 25.

³ Mic. 7. 6.

⁴ Luke 14. 26.

⁵ Ch. 16. 24. Luke 9. 23. Mark 8. 34.

⁶ Luke 10. 16. John 13. 20.

⁷ Mark 9. 41.

§ 36. *How much we ought to suffer and do for Christ, and how great will be our reward.*

The apostles had been already warned to expect persecution from the world without. They have here, further, notice, that not even in their own families must they look for peace and concord. The Gospel is good tidings of "peace on earth;" see Luke 2. 14; that is, it makes us, in proportion as we receive it, at peace, with God, and with each other. But at its first preaching, it engrossed so deeply the affection of some, and so vehemently excited the opposition of others, as not unfrequently to set at variance even children and parents. Nor must we suppose that it will ensure us peace, even where it is generally professed; but expect rather, that it will sometimes furnish matter of painful difference amongst the nearest friends. Whensoever such cases shall arise, and they of the same household become in this sense our foes; let us remember that then only are we worthy of Christ, when we love not more than Him, father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife. The duties we owe to these several relatives are so plainly enforced in the Gospel, and the affection we feel for them so highly extolled, that, in most instances, a readiness to comply with their desires will be the most substantial proof of our love towards Christ. And we must consider, therefore, these words of his to be comparative; not meant to extenuate the love we owe to them, but to exalt so much the higher that which is due to Him. Where, however, their wishes are opposed to that which, after the utmost pains taken to inquire, we believe, in all humility, to be his will; then, if we would be worthy of our Saviour, we must resolve to have his will preferred. Even this cross we must take up; and incur the displeasure of those we best love, rather than not follow Him. Even our lives, if needful, and all that makes life worth living, must we be willing for his sake to lose, if we would through Him hereafter find it.

In the midst of these threatened troubles, Christ assures his apostles, that whosoever received them should be counted to receive Himself. And He thus puts on record, for us, the most lively motive we could conceive, to treat with especial kindness those, whom we see to be ill used for his sake. If some have "entertained angels unawares," Heb. 13. 2, we too may have the privilege, in refreshing an oppressed disciple, of entertaining our common Lord and Saviour. Let us study both to receive "a prophet in the name of a prophet," that is, to treat with reverence, and assist with readiness, for their office' sake, the ministers of the word. And further, let us receive "a righteous man in the name of a righteous man;" that is, prefer such for our friends, not out of any worldly convenience we may expect to ensue, but out of a hearty regard for Christian piety, out of a lively sympathy in their love of Christ. And as we should be ever willing to do good to all men, so let us render ever our best offices to those whom, by reason of their sufferings in his behalf, we may count for his little ones, or beloved children. Whilst for ourselves we must herein look for no immediate return; but for a reward, which, when there shall be no more trouble, no more strife, no more death, we have God's sure word for it, that we shall in no wise lose.

Yes, it is reward that Christ vouchsafes to call it, though earned, as we well know, by no work of ours, but by his allsufficient worth. Only, by often calling it reward, He would impress on us this salutary truth, that our lot in the future life; is in some sort closely dependent on our conduct in this: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6. 7. More indeed, inestimably greater in amount, whether of glory, or of perdition; greater and more important, as are things eternal than things temporal. Yet shall every man receive "according to his deeds." Rom. 2. 6. And so carefully kept is the account, that where but "a cup of cold water" is given in true Christian love, our Lord has here declared of the giver, "he shall in no wise lose his reward." The more deeply we lay to heart this promise of a recompense, as our encouragement in Christian practice, the more frequently will our manifold frailties throw us back on the divine mercies, as they are assured to transgressors through the blood of Christ. And what can, on the other hand, more enliven our faith in his merits, and our sense of his love, than the hope that, through these, there is secured for service so faint, so frail as ours, a crown of eternal glory?

John sendeth his disciples to Christ.

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

2 ¹ Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and

shew John again those things which ye do hear and see :

5 ² The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and ³ the poor have the gospel preached to them.

6 And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

¹ Luke 7. 18.

² Is. 35. 6.

³ Is. 61. 1.

§ 37. *The evidence of prophecy and of miracle.*

How unwearied is our Lord in his labour of love ! “ When he had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.” He ceased not to work Himself, though He had others now commissioned to work for Him. Let those, who have others under them, learn hence, that they are not therefore excusable in a life of sloth, not therefore the less bound to labour in some useful employment. And let all of us here resolve to be “ not weary in well doing,” but diligent in whatever good we have in hand ; not doubting that, “ in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not.” Gal. 6. 9.

It was the office of John to prepare the minds of his disciples for believing in Christ. When therefore he was now in prison, and shortly about to die, he sends two of them, in order to inquire of Jesus, whether He were the Messiah or not. “ Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another ? ” This he is thought to have done for his disciples’ sake, who, after attending on his instructions, might probably have been inclined to prefer him for their master, to that Lord who was greater than he. For himself, he had plainly testified that Jesus was the Christ ; when he uttered that most full confession, “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1. 29. And yet we might not be surprised, if in the prison of Herod, he should himself have entertained some painful doubts, and applied to our Lord for satisfaction. The most eminent of God’s servants are not secure either from doubt or falling. Prosperity is the snare of some. Others faint under the rod of affliction. Can this be the Son of God who suffers me to be cast into prison ? is a misgiving which might very probably cross the mind of John the Baptist. It is such a one as has been many times suggested to the souls of afflicted Christians.

The answer is to be found in what follows : “ Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see.” The miracles of our Lord appeal to the plain senses of mankind. The disciples, if they could but hear and see, might know Him to be commissioned from on high. For no one, they might be sure, could do what He did, except God were with him. See John 3. 2. And further they might know Him to be no other prophet than the very Christ Himself, by reason of the prophecies which thus described the mighty works of the Messiah : “ The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” Isai. 35. 5, 6. Thus are we directed, with the disciples of St. John, to consider prophecy and miracles, as the two main pillars of the Gospel revelation ; as the two most sure proofs that Jesus was the Christ. Whereof, prophecy may convince us, that He was concerned in it who knoweth all things ; and miracles, that He brought it to pass, to whose power all things are subject. Whilst both in this instance establish the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of mankind, the promised Seed, even He that should come into the world.

Let us then take to ourselves his words which follow : “ Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Blessed is that man, who shall not, by the perversity of his own disposition, be hindered from believing in Christ. Blessed is he, the hardness of whose heart shall yield to the grace and truth of God ; and who, instead of being offended, that is stumbling, at the Gospel, shall receive it gladly, and be moved, by the receiving of it, unto newness of life. We, who live so long after our Lord’s coming, cannot enjoy, in the same manner, the benefit of those wonders, which at the first proved Him to be the Christ. We cannot see with our own eyes those miracles by Him performed, or those prophecies in Him fulfilled. But many prophecies there are in our own times fulfilling, of which we may plainly know, that they were recorded hundreds of years ago. Wonders, too, though not miracles, wonders scarce less strange, wrought by the same Lord, by his grace in man’s heart, these we may at the present time experience in ourselves. When we are made, through faith, to know things that are invisible ; is not this for the blind to see ? When they, whose feet are prone to evil, are enabled to live uprightly before God ; is not this for the lame to walk ? * Are not the lepers cleansed, when our sins, which were as scarlet, become white as snow ? And, when the heart, which was insensible to God’s goodness, is quickened to the fear and to the love of Him ; are not the very dead raised up ? The poor too have now the Gospel preached unto them. The tidings of salvation are now made known, with no less fulness, to the lowliest in the land, than to the monarch on his throne. Blessed therefore, now also, is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Christ. Blessed are they who shall profit by these means of conviction, not neglecting them to their own greater condemnation, but improving them, to their growth in grace !

Testimony of Christ concerning John.

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is *he*, of whom it is written, ¹ Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

¹ Mal. 3. 1.

² Luke 16. 16.

|| Or, *is gotten by force, and they that thrust men.*

³ Mal. 4. 5.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 ² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven || suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is ³ Elias, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

§ 38. *How the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence.*

Our Lord, in what went before, had corrected the views held in regard to Himself by St. John's disciples. He now sets right his own followers in their notions relating to the Baptist. St. John was by no means, as some perhaps thought, "a reed shaken with the wind," a man wavering in the doctrine he taught; but one whose preaching, rightly understood, uniformly testified that Jesus was the Christ. He was not, as some probably expected, a man clothed in soft raiment, habited like the messenger of them that rule in this world. His plain dress, as well as his sparing food, betokened rather the nature of that kingdom which he proclaimed, the reign of repentance, and self denial, and humility. Nor was he a prophet only. For besides foretelling, in his preaching, the kingdom of heaven, he was in his own person also a sign of its being come, his appearance being, according to former prophecy, appointed to prepare the way for Christ. Therefore was it his high commendation that "among them that are born of women," among all who up to that time had, in the ordinary way, descended from our first parents, "there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." And this high character we should observe, Christ gives him at the very time when he lay helpless in the prison of Herod. So many times are they, whom the world reckons most forlorn, esteemed the most highly in God's sight! So readily ought we also to own, and to speak well of, those whom we count for our brethren in Christ, at the very season when they are most in trouble, dishonour, or distress!

"Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." These latter words our Lord speaks, either of his apostles, or of Himself. And his meaning seems to be this: Though I thus highly praise John, and though the world reckons so little of my followers, and of Me, yet you should be aware, that I being the very person he foreshewed, I am greater than he; and you, as being my apostles, are greater also. For greater are the mysteries you have to reveal, more heavenly the doctrines, the motives, and the practice, you have to preach. Greater also is the sanction that will be given to your ministry, by miracles; the Lord, as St. Mark 16. 20, afterwards related, "confirming the word with signs following." And not you only, but my one even the least of my disciples, however low his rank and station in the flock, is in this sense greater than St. John, that he is a member of the new kingdom of heaven. For now is that kingdom being taken by force; now is it in the power of the earnest, the zealous, the persevering, however low their birth, or lowly their station, to become children, through faith, of God most high. No one therefore that lived before this time can be equal to those who enjoy these privileges. "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." Ch. 13. 17.

And here let us note the temper by means of which the kingdom of heaven is said to be entered. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." This does not of course imply that any violence amongst each other is allowable in Christians; but that, whilst they are to be meek, and gentle, and peaceable, they must be strong, also in faith, and zeal, firm, and undaunted, in their efforts to attain unto everlasting life. Heaven, as we are elsewhere told, is to be approached only by a narrow way, only by a strait gate. Here we have the same notion enforced under a different figure. It is as a city fortified, which can be entered only by force. It is a house barred up, and fenced in, which none but the violent can break open. Let not us then be content to live at ease. Let us take some pains that may be compared with violence, towards entering the kingdom of heaven. If we are making no advance in holiness, if we do no violence to our own evil passions, if we resist not the devil, if we do not daily feel more and more the sinfulness of many things we do, and more and more, daily endeavour to do many things we have hitherto left undone; how can we be counted to have fought a good fight? how expect to enter with triumph into the heavenly city? Greater are our privileges, than those of prophets and kings, who lived before the manifestation of Christ. Greater in proportion should be our zeal; greater our exertion also.

May He, who hath set before us a crown so glorious, give us grace to desire it more earnestly, to contend for it more faithfully, and finally to attain unto its enjoyment, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The waywardness of the Jews; and the sentence of Chorazin.

16 ¹ But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

20 ² Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

¹ Luke 7. 31.

² Luke 10. 13.

§ 39. *The peril of knowing God's will without doing it.*

The very same hearers found fault with John for his fastings, and with Jesus for his eating and drinking. By reason of this waywardness and folly, they are here likened to children, who, as they change rapidly their several sports, find fault, one party with another, for not changing as readily as themselves. So is it not unfrequently the case with those unhappy persons, who are bent against admitting the truth of God's revelation. Their several objections are inconsistent with each other; and prove only the perversity of their own will, only their determination at all events to disbelieve. So also, it is not uncommon for professed believers to find over some fault in their spiritual teachers. One they reckon too austere, another they call over indulgent; instead of aiming to profit, by the thankful use of whatever means of edification they have within their reach. So also, in the other duties we have each of us to do, how commonly do we plead excuses the most inconsistent, for the neglect of God's commands! When called upon to give, then we bethink ourselves of frugality. When it is a time to be frugal, then we are inclined to spend. When we ought not so much as to think evil of our brother, oh, how apt is the tongue to reproach and to complain! And when it would be true charity to tell him of his fault, oh, how reluctant are our lips, to hurt, either his feelings, or our own!

"But wisdom is justified of her children." That is to say, in spite of this prevailing perversity of mankind, though many thus derive no benefit from the counsel of God for their salvation; yet are there many who use it effectually; yet are there enough convinced, converted, and confirmed in holiness, to justify all the pains that have been taken for that end. How large must be the value of each single soul! and how great the joy and glory of its saving! if even the few that shall be chosen are enough to justify the whole economy of grace, if these few, how few we know not, are worth all the provision of prophecy, the interference of miracles, the incarnation of Christ, and, above all, the shedding of his blood! And how should it animate our faint exertions, and quicken our dead affections towards heaven, to think that we have within us a charge so precious; souls, that by a true faith in the Gospel of Christ, may justify its wisdom to the world!

Or let us lay to heart, on the other hand, the sentence recorded, in what follows, against a wilful unbelief. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!" saith our Lord, "woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" cities these wherein many of his miracles had been wrought; "for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes," they would have believed in earnest, so as to change their hearts and lives. "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." Hence it appears, that the future Judge of all can measure, even in those who never heard the Gospel, how far, had they heard it, they would have obeyed it. And with such persons, He will weigh, in the balance of equity, those who have seen, and heard, without conviction. What a fearful thought is this to us, who are enjoying, in so full degree, the light of the Gospel of Christ! Far more we know of our Lord, and of his mighty works, than did they of Chorazin and Bethsaida. We know that for us He died on the cross. We know that for us He arose from the dead. We know that He ascended also into heaven, in order that where He is, there we might be also. See John 14. 3. Are then our hearts already there? Does our knowledge affect our intentions, our desires, our exertions towards holiness and heaven! Does it work in us that repentance and faith, that amendment of life, and devotion of soul, which it would have wrought, as our Saviour tells us, in the most profligate of the heathen? If not, if we know without practice, if, whilst we take pride in our knowledge of Christianity, we are all the while "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. 3. 4; our sentence is here plainly set down, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you."

Christ calleth to Him all who labour and are heavy laden.

25 ¹ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 ² All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; ³ nei-

ther knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 ⁴ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

¹ Luke 10. 21.

² John 3. 35.

³ John 6. 46.

⁴ Jer. 6. 16.

⁵ 1 John 5. 3.

§ 40. *That the yoke of Christ is rest to the weary soul.*

It was not for hiding the Gospel from the wise, but for revealing it to the simple, that our Lord here offers thanks unto the Father. The expression is like that of St. Paul to the Romans, 6. 17. "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." In both cases it is implied that the blessing spoken of, when compared with the evil referred to, is so much the more worthy of especial thanks. That they who, in the estimation of the world, are wise and prudent, should often fall short of the knowledge of Christ, is indeed most deeply to be lamented. But so much the more ought we to rejoice, that these things are revealed to all, who have the simplicity and willingness of babes. Herein we see one great excellence of the Christian dispensation, that it requires for a saving knowledge, not that learning which only few can attain, but that honesty of purpose, which is in the reach of all. The Gospel is revealed unto babes. It is revealed not by human wisdom, but by the "Lord of heaven and earth;" and by Him it is applied as easily to the most plain, as to the most enlightened, understanding; to the hearts of children, as of full grown men.

That Son to whom all things are delivered, and who alone can reveal to us the Father, hath so also Himself ordained it; offering rest to all without distinction, who labour and are heavy laden with the burden of sin. "Take my yoke upon you," saith He, "and learn of me." Work not, that is to say, on your own plan, but under my yoke, under my guidance. Be not in your own conceit wise and prudent, but "learn of me;" apply to Me; and, as children to a parent or a master, so commit your minds to my instruction. "For I am meek and lowly in heart." In my own conduct you may find a pattern of the humility I require. I, even the Son, I who alone can reveal the Father, even I am meek, and lowly in heart. Much more then does it become you to be so. "And ye shall find rest unto your souls." Ye shall enjoy that inward peace, which no wisdom, power, or wealth of this world, can bestow. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Ye shall be relieved from the yoke of the Law. The authority I exercise, and the service I require, will redound to your comfort here, as well as to your happiness in heaven.

It is true we are in other passages bidden earnestly to "strive," Luke 13. 24; told to exert ourselves as the "violent," ch. 11. 12; and warned that we must run, as in a race, if we would hope to win the prize. See 1 Cor. 9. 24. And, at first sight, this may seem hardly to agree with Christ's yoke being easy, and his burden light. But we may hence learn in what sense it is so; namely, not as allowing us in sin, but as altogether requiring of us to sin no more. Hard it may be to be holy; but it is harder to be wicked, and to be miserable for ever. Most difficult, even in this life, is the yoke of sin; most heavy the burden of an unchristian life. Instead of being meek, to be irritable, and unkind to each other. Instead of lowly in heart, to be proud, selfish, and easily offended. Ever to be full of care about the morrow of this world; ever to be full of remorse for the past. To have the feelings and the conscience, perpetually at variance. To have no peace in life, and no hope in death. This is the labour, this the heavy load, from which the yoke of Christ will give effectual rest. Light is that yoke compared with the weight of sin. Light, when He helps us Himself to bear it. Light, when He beareth our infirmities, and his strength is made perfect in our weakness. "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all." Psalm 34. 19. His worldly afflictions may be as heavy as those of other men. And besides them, he has a care the world knows nothing of, the care of his immortal soul; the working out his salvation with fear and trembling. Yet do all these things "work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8. 28. The most irksome labour is made agreeable, and the most painful anxiety is relieved by love. The body may suffer, but the heart has joy. The flesh may be weary, but the soul is sure of rest.

God grant that, as each heart "knoweth his own bitterness," Prov. 14. 10, so each may seek for comfort to this source of sweetest joy! God turn the thoughts of them who know Him not, from the toil of indolent enjoyment, and from the pains of pleasurable sin, to the pure delights of holiness and hope! God raise up them that tremble at his word; strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; revive the spirit of the humble, and revive the heart of the contrite ones! See Isai. 66. 5; 35. 3; 57. 15.

That the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath.

1 At that time ¹ Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read ² what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, ³ but only for the priests?

5 Or have ye not read in the ⁴ law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.

7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, ⁵ I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

9 ⁶ And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.

¹ Mark 2. 23. Luke 6. 1. Deut. 23. 25.

² Numb. 28. 9.

³ 1 Sam. 21. 6.

⁴ Hos. 6. 6. ch. 9. 13.

⁵ Exod. 29. 32, 33. Lev. 8. 31. & 24. 9.

⁶ Mark 3. 1. Luke 6. 6.

§ 41. *The rule of the Christian sabbath.*

In the sermon on the mount we learn exactly how far the Gospel was designed to interfere with the elder revelation. "Think not," saith our Lord, "think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Chap. 5. 17. Part He had to fulfil by his life, and by his death, by the miracles He wrought, by the example He left, by the cross which He endured; and part by the doctrine He taught, by the more full revelation He made of the will of God. This declaration is followed up, in that divine discourse, by an enlarged and spiritual application of some of the most important commandments of the Law. Here we have the law of the sabbath thus fulfilled, thus enlarged, that is, enforced and applied in its true spiritual sense, to the conscience of the Christian.

The disciples, it seems, plucked some corn, in order to satisfy their hunger as they went through the fields. This, as we learn in Deuteronomy 23. 25, was strictly according to the letter of the law: "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand, but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn." The disciples however had done this on the sabbath day. And the Pharisees, who exacted a most rigid observance of the letter of the fourth commandment, found herein new ground of complaint. "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, 'Have ye not read what David did?'" He first reminds them of an instance in their own history, how David and his company satisfied their hunger with the shewbread, see 1 Sam. 21. 6, which, according to the Law, should have been eaten only by the priests; whatever remained over being appointed to be burnt. See Exod. 29. 32, 33. This action, therefore, of David proved thus much, that urgent hunger was a case of such necessity, as to justify a violation of the Law.

But further our Lord argues, "the priests in the temple profane the sabbath," that is, they violate the entire rest of it, by their offering of burnt sacrifice, see Num. 28. 9. "and are blameless." For the Law itself enjoined them so to do. "But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple." If, that is to say, the necessary services of the temple justify the priests in what they do on the sabbath, much more may my disciples, deprived by their attendance upon Me of their former livelihood, pluck and eat on this day these ears of corn.

And besides all this, He reminds them of passages in the Jewish Scriptures, which point to a more spiritual method of interpreting all the commandments of God. Such was that of Hosea 6. 6. "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice." Sacrifice was one of the chief things appointed by the Law. And yet the Jews were here plainly told, that it must never interfere with that heavenly temper, which it was the object of the Law to produce. So also would it be a gross mistake to enforce the observation of the sabbath, by any harsh or uncharitable censure of those who neglect it. "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day." And his apostles were fully justified by his sanction. And the Pharisees, therefore, in finding fault with them, had "condemned the guiltless."

The sovereignty of the Son of man over the sabbath day has been made manifest, by the ordinance having been observed, since his time, on what, according to the Jews' reckoning, is the first, instead of on the last day of the week. Our sabbath is the day on which He arose from the dead, and became the first fruits of that new creation, which comprehends all those who die in the Lord. That day then let us take care to spend, not in mere ceasing from worldly work, much less in the enjoyment of mere worldly pleasures; but in labouring for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, let us pluck, and eat, the ears of that good seed, which will spring up in us unto everlasting life. The harvest is ready. The Lord of the harvest invites. His word proclaims to all who are in need, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat." Isai. 55. 1. The sabbath is of all others the great day for this work of spiritual improvement. Let us seek to enjoy its benefit, not by the formal indolent use of outward ordinances, but by such diligent and faithful attendance on them, as may nourish the soul, against the life that is to come.

The withered hand healed on the sabbath day.

10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself

from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

16 And charged them that they should not make him known:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

|| Or, took counsel.

¹ Is. 42. 1.

§ 42. *The use and limit of publicity in doing good.*

The Pharisees, in finding fault with the disciples, for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath, were convicted by our Lord of condemning the guiltless. Yet they were not the less anxious, immediately afterwards, to find ground for accusing in like manner our Lord Himself. Let us beware lest, if like them we once begin to find fault wrongfully, we should be tempted to add sin to sin, till like them we come to shame, and confusion of face.

“And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.” Jesus first appeals to their own ordinary practice. They were ready, on the sabbath, to rescue any animal that had fallen into danger. Hence He argues, from their own admission, that it is lawful on the sabbath days to do well; that is, to do any act of charity or kindness, if to a dumb animal, much more to our fellow creatures. “Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand.” This we may reckon the second point in our Lord’s answer to the Pharisees. For as none other than God could fulfil these words of power, their fulfilment proved the lawfulness of healing the man on the sabbath. “And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.” Thus did Christ silence his gainsayers, at once by the force of reason, and by the evidence of their senses. Would that Christians in like manner sought to convince the world, not by words only, and by arguments, but by actions of Christianity! Would that, by bounty more enlarged, by honesty more strict, by diligence more disinterested, than that of the rest of mankind, they would stretch forth the withered hand, and make manifest the power of God’s grace.

The Pharisees, though put to silence, were none the nearer to being converted, but “went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence.” This He did that He might avoid raising any public disturbance. And for the same reason, though He healed all among the multitudes which followed Him, He “charged them that they should not make him known.” In this conduct we find fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, in which the Messiah is described as the chosen of God, the beloved in whom He is well pleased. Isai. 42. 1, 2, 3. “I have put my spirit upon him;” meaning, on Him shall the Holy Ghost descend. “And he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;” through Him, that is, shall the way of righteousness be revealed to all mankind. “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.” He shall be meek, gentle, and peaceable, in the method of his ministration upon earth. “A bruised reed shall he not break.” He will not bear hard on the spirit that is already contrite. “And the smoking flax shall he not quench.” Nor extinguish by severity the slightest embers of repentance and faith. “He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” This forbearance He shall continue to shew till He bring forth “judgment unto victory,” till the time when man’s trial shall cease, the judgment take place, and the triumph of holiness over sin be signalized, by the reward of the one, and by the punishment of the other.

This prophecy did our Saviour now plainly fulfil by the meekness with which He withdrew from his enemies, and by the privacy which He enjoined on those whom He had healed. Yet was He ready, as we find elsewhere, to avow Himself openly; whenever, by so doing, He could promote the good of the people, or the glory of God. Hence we may learn both how to encounter evil, and how to be doing good. Openly we ought to give our alms, and firmly to brave scorn and malice, whenever we may thus best encourage others in their duty. Yet should we withdraw from the view, and avoid the observation of them that would revile our religion, when we can do so without dishonour to God. And when, without discouragement of others’ charity, we can conceal our own bounty, then should we not so much as let the left hand know what the right hand doeth. See Matt. 6. 3.

Christ healeth one who was both blind and dumb.

22 ¹ Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

24 ² But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

¹ Luke 11. 14.

² Ch. 9. 34.

§ 43. *That Christ doth not cast out devils by Beelzebub.*

That he, who was blind and dumb, should both speak and see, that the man should be healed, and the evil spirit cast out by Jesus, these things made the people ask in their amazement, "Is not this the Son of David?" "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." They did not, like some later unbelievers, question the fact of our Lord's miracles. Or rather they could not possibly do this, whilst the miracles were being daily performed by Christ. They ascribed therefore his mighty works to the agency of the evil spirits, to the very power which He assailed and subdued. The absurdity of this notion is here exposed, by four distinct considerations.

First, it amounts to supposing that Satan would cast out Satan, would himself frustrate his own malice, divide against itself his own kingdom. Hence we may infer the folly of ascribing, as the world is apt to do, any conduct which bears the marks of Christian excellence, to selfish, unworthy motives, to false enthusiasm, or yet more false hypocrisy. Satan doth not cast out Satan. Christian conduct flows only from Christian grace. And wherever we see the one, we are justified by reason to presume, as well as bound in charity to hope, the other.

Secondly, our Lord argues, "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" Your children, that is, the apostles, themselves children of Israel, who had lately been commissioned to cast out devils, who had already done so, and against whom the Pharisees brought no such objection. "Therefore shall they be your judges." They, being of your own family, have through Me been enabled to do this very thing, which, in Me ye object to, though ye allow it in them. They have been convinced by my miracles that the kingdom of God is come. They have proved their faith by their success in this very work. They then, as having had no better means of conviction than yourselves, they shall be your judges; they shall rise up in the judgment against you, and shall condemn you. Have then we ourselves in common many means of knowledge and of grace? And is there any one who falls short in the use of them? Let him remember that the very children of the same family, the other members of the same household, who profit by the privileges which he enjoys in vain, let him remember, these shall be his judges.

Thirdly, not only do I not work through the aid of Satan, in casting out his subject spirits, but I must needs have first bound the strong man, ere I could thus spoil his house. My healing the possessed of devils is thus a sign, not of my working with him, or through him, but of my having taken him captive. Strong though he be, strong as against man's frailty, yet is he weak before my power. Let us then, in all our spiritual conflicts, encourage ourselves with reflecting, that He, whom we serve, He, who is on our side, has bound the strong man; and will enable us, if only we quit ourselves as men, see 1 Cor. 16. 13, to share also in spoiling his house.

Fourthly, "He that is not with me is against me." My object is to do good. His to do evil to the souls of men. How can it then be that he, whose main design is so opposite to mine, should in any respect work with Me? Nay, how can he fail to work against Me? Here we see how watchful we ought to be against every thought, connexion, or pursuit, which helps us not forward in our Christian course. Either it is with Christ, or against Him. If it forms no part of our duty; if it tends not to make us more holy, more heavenly minded, more helpful to man our brother, or more serviceable to our master Christ; then, we may be sure, it is against us, it is against our souls, for it is a hindrance to their salvation.

Thus false is shewn to be the conclusion of the Pharisees against our Lord. Let us rather infer, with the people, that He was the son of David. Let us as faithful subjects obey his word. And kneeling down in reverence at his footstool, let us beseech Him to cast out of ourselves all evil spirits, all blindness of mind, all deafness, all dumbness of heart, that would render us unfit for his service. That we may thus better see his truth, and hear his word, and sound his praise. And that there may be in us, no divided empire, but only the kingdom of God through Christ.

Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven.

31 Wherefore I say unto you, ¹ All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

¹ Mark 3. 28. Luke 12. 10. 1 John 5. 16.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? ² for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words*thou shalt be condemned.

² Luke 6. 45.

§ 44. *How we shall be justified or condemned by our words.*

To speak a word against the Son of man, means, to express a doubt as to whether He were the Christ. This our Lord allows to be comparatively pardonable in his hearers; meaning, especially whilst He appeared to them as “a man of sorrows,” Isai. 53. 3, in a form and character so different from what they ignorantly expected. But to speak against the Holy Ghost was to speak against that Spirit with which in their own Scriptures they were familiar. And to ascribe the miracles which that Spirit had foretold, and now very plainly fulfilled, to ascribe these out of mere perversity to Beelzebub, this was an offence, comparatively, if not absolutely, unpardonable. As “the tree is known by his fruit,” so might the Jews plainly know, that the casting out of devils, being a good work, could not come of an evil spirit, but of the good Spirit. To ascribe it to the corrupt tree, to account for it by the agency of Beelzebub, was wilful blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

And here we should observe for our comfort, that whereas many persons have suffered painful apprehension lest they should fall into this unpardonable sin, and have been perplexed to understand what sin it is; we should observe, it is no where called in Scripture the sin against the Holy Ghost, but always “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.” So that we may know certainly it is an offence of the lips; rooted indeed in an evil heart of unbelief, but expressed in a daring denial of the Spirit, in ascribing his work to devils.

Our Lord, in acts of contumely against Himself, returned always good for evil; graciously bearing with the contradiction of those, who, even in his humiliation, had full means to know Him. He now threatens, however, with endless punishment, such wanton words as blaspheme the Holy Ghost. And He reproves severely the Pharisees, as being guilty, or at least in danger, of this grievous offence. “O generation of vipers.” He allows them not for children of Abraham, but refers them to fit parents for malice so venomous. “How can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” No wonder ye thus utter blasphemy, for in your hearts ye cherish evil unbelief. And according to whatsoever in the heart is felt, does the mind imagine, and the tongue express. And since the words of the mouth are so sure a sign of the state of the heart, therefore, our Lord adds, “I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Not only against wilful and extreme blasphemy, is punishment ordained for ever; but for all offences of the lips, for all words whatsoever, even for those which are spoken with least consciousness, or thought, shall men have to answer hereafter.

Thus by our words we shall be justified, or by our words we shall be condemned; accounted either to be, or not to be, justified, through faith in Christ. Our words will be taken for a fruit of faith, or a proof of faithlessness, no less sure, and sufficient, than our actions. It is not enough that we speak habitually the truth, that we avoid slander, censure, ill language, oaths, and corrupt communication. Our conversation must be holy; even such as flows from holiness in the heart. It must imply ever, if not express, a love, and reverence for God. It must prove that we are not ashamed of Christ, and of his words, in the midst of “an evil and adulterous generation.” Ver. 39. Let us not then deem it too much to watch each idle word we utter. For Christ has here plainly told us, they will not be too much for Him to judge. Those, which are the most lightly spoken, have often the most weight of sin. And those, of which we take least heed run most risk to be noted for our condemnation. With horror let us avoid all approach to blasphemy, as to a sin, that least of any, admits of pardon. Carefully too let us guard against all other offences of the lips. Nor let us be content to be only not condemned by our words. Let us endeavour also in this sense to be justified by them. Let us speak ever with an eye to God's glory, and follow after those things wherewith one may edify another. See 1 Thess. 5. 11. Let us seek frequent opportunity to inform and exhort our brethren for good. And let us make occasion, where we cannot find it, by shewing forth, in all we say, at any time, a spirit of forbearance, gentleness, and love.

Christ rebuketh them who ask for a sign.

38 ¹ Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

40 ² For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: ³ because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

42 ⁴ The queen of the south shall rise up in the

judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

43 ⁵ When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: ⁶ and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

¹ Ch. 16. 1. Luke 11. 29. 1 Cor. 1. 22

² Luke 11. 24.

³ Jonah 1. 17.

⁴ Jonah 3. 5.

⁵ 1 Kings 10. 1.

⁶ Heb. 6. 4. and 10. 26. 2 Pet. 2. 20.

§ 45. *How we may be the worse for privileges, if we abuse them.*

The Pharisees here try a new method of ensnaring the divine Teacher. They come to Him with plausible words, calling Him by the name of "Master," and expressing their readiness to believe, if He would but give them some certain sign. To their more provoking questions He had before answered meekly; He now proves his knowledge of their purpose, and his aversion to their flattery, by a more severe reply. "An evil and adulterous generation," degenerate from their fathers, and themselves guilty of all manner of evil, "seeketh after a sign;" would fain have some evidence more forcible than what God offers, and demand for their believing, demonstrations so plain, as would leave no room for belief at all. "There shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." The evidences of prophecy and miracle are enough. And bath does the case of Jonas afford: prophecy, in that the Son of man shall fulfil what Jonas had in the whale foreshewn; and miracle, in that He shall do so, by raising Himself, after having been three days dead, from the bowels of the earth. The Ninevites we know repented, but the Jews did not. And yet Jonas was a stranger, and Christ preached to his own, to a people prepared for his ministration. Jonas wrought no miracle, and Christ many. Jonas preached once only, Christ continually. Therefore might He well say, that they, who repented at the preaching of Jonas, should rise in the judgment with that generation, and condemn it. Their conversion proves that God gave by his prophets, much more by his Son, sufficient signs for faith. And it must aggravate therefore the condemnation of all those who nevertheless refuse to believe. And much more shall they be condemned by the queen of the south, who not waiting to be called or preached to, came herself, "from the uttermost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." So that instead of demanding any further sign, ye ought yourselves, our Lord means, to press forward for that heaven which I now proclaim; ye ought to repent at the preaching of that Messiah, of whom Jonas and Solomon were but prophets and types.

To these reproofs our Lord here adds one other fearful consideration, which we may do well to attend to as most important to ourselves. It is this; that to neglect opportunities of knowledge, to fall away from grace given, renders a man, so much the more utterly, the victim of sinful passions, and of evil spirits. Ever are these malicious enemies on the watch for our destruction. And though one should be for a time cast out, yet only so much the more is he dissatisfied, till he can regain possession of the soul he once has counted for his own. How watchful ought this thought to make us! how anxious to increase daily in the knowledge of Christ, and not in the knowing only, but in the doing also of Christ's will! For what though the soul be swept and garnished, that is, cleared of ignorance, furnished with better means to do right; yet, if the evil spirit find it empty also, if it have not profited by its knowledge, and improved its opportunities of good, but is still unoccupied by the Spirit of God, untenanted by the graces of the Christian covenant; then taketh he "seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." His passions are more confirmed in the mastery, his heart more hardened in sin, his repentance more hopeless, his condemnation more severe.

So was it with the wicked generation of the Jews. So will it be with those also, who, in our favoured eminence of religious knowledge, attain not a due proportion of Christian grace. To be empty is not safety. Either we must be filled with faith and holiness; or, our last state, as we learn here, will be worse than the first. Else will the men of Nineveh, and the queen of the south, rise up in the judgment against us also, and condemn us. Else will spirits worse than that of ignorance, even those of an unthankful and a hardened heart, enter in, and dwell with us for ever.

The mother and brethren of Christ desire to speak with Him.

46 While he yet talked to the people, ¹ behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

48 But he answered and said unto him that told

him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

¹ Mark 3. 31. Luke 8. 20.

§ 46. *To be the brethren of Christ is the most true nobility.*

The mother and brethren of Jesus became naturally of great importance in the eyes of the disciples. So great indeed, that in after times Christians fell into the gross error of dividing to them the honour due to Christ alone. Against any such sinful practice this passage affords an useful warning. For though our Lord on due occasions treated ever with most kind attention his earthly parent, we see here that He considered her to be no more exempt from human frailty, no less subject to his divine admonitions, than any other of his hearers. "While he yet talked to the people," He was interrupted by the tidings, that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. What message they sent to that effect is not here set down. But it appears as if they reckoned too highly on their claim of kindred, in asking the exclusive attention of Christ, whilst He was engaged in preaching the Gospel. The remark which followed, from the divine Teacher, was calculated to check in the many undue presumption in their special privileges. "Who," saith He, "is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Hence we learn how groundless a superstition it is, to offer, unto the mother of our Lord, any reverence approaching to divine worship. Deeply we ought to respect the memory of one who was so "highly favoured." Luke 1. 28. And greatly we ought to profit by the example of all God's departed saints. But we must observe, in regard to divine honours, one exclusive rule: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Ch. 4. 10.

Here also we see the folly of being proud, as many among mankind are, of their high extraction, or great relations. If to be so near akin to Christ Himself conferred no exclusive dignity, how much less should any one be elated by relationship to the most noble of his fellow creatures, to the most wealthy, or even to the best! The eminence, or the graces of our ancestors and kindred, are matters that should move us to exertion, not encourage us in that vanity which leads commonly to sloth. The more they have done, the more we ought to try to do, lest we be found to fall short. And specially the more of service to our heavenly Lord should we therefore aim to perform; running herein a race, in all humility, but with all zeal and hope, striving to win the prize. For here we have set before us the fountain of true nobility; even to do the will of God above. Here is proposed to all, that through faith and obedience, they may each severally be reckoned for brother and sister by Christ Himself. At what higher distinction can the most ambitious aim? To what kindred more exalted can the most noble pretend? And to all is this most graciously extended; even to all, who honestly and earnestly endeavour to be Christians indeed, to all who walk watchfully in Christian holiness, through faith in Christ our Saviour.

Let us then be content with no less than this, to be counted of that blessed family whereof Christ is the head; to be in the number of those brethren whereof He is the elder. And for this end let us remember we must do more than stand without, desiring to speak with Him. We must do more than wait for Him. We must wait on Him, with prayer, and earnest supplication, that He will speak, with us, and to us, to our souls. We must do the brother's part, taking up always his cause as our own, forwarding any work in which his honour is concerned, and fearlessly confessing his name before a sinful and scornful generation. Then shall we find it in this life a relationship most fruitful in every good gift. Are we poor? we have a Brother who can make us rich. Are we weak? He can make us strong; strong in faith, and rich in grace. In our doubts, He will give us counsel; in our sorrow, consolation; in our joy, discretion and sobriety. But what are the sorrows, or the joys, of this world, in comparison with those of eternity? There, and in that hour when most we fear, when most our trembling hope shrinks from the presence of the Almighty God; then, if we have been here true brethren of Christ, then shall we have stretched forth to us his gracious hand, and hear in our favour his voice proclaim, "Behold my mother and my brethren!"

May our heavenly King confer on us the true nobility to be sons of Him, brethren of Christ! brethren, who dwell together in unity of faith and love! sons, who though what they shall be doth not yet appear, know that when He shall appear they shall be like Him. See 1 John 3. 2.

The parable of the sower and the seed.

1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, ¹ and sat by the sea side.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, ¹ Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not

much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹ Mark 4. 1.

² Luke 8. 5.

§ 47. *The time and place and manner of hearing.*

The parable of the sower is explained in what follows by our Lord Himself. We shall now therefore consider the time, and place, at which He delivered it; and the manner in which He exhorted his disciples to hear it. "The same day went Jesus out of the house." "And he spake many things unto them in parables." It was the day during which He had already been for a long time, as appears in the last chapter, speaking to the people. And there is reason to suppose that it was on a sabbath day. Whence we may take occasion to infer, both, the duty incumbent on those who teach to labour on that day more abundantly; and also the privilege to be on that day more largely enjoyed by those who have the benefit of divine instruction. Let us then rejoice in the many opportunities, we have offered us, to hear on the Lord's day the word of God. At home, and at church, in the public service, and in private devotion, let us be as desirous on our parts, to pray and to learn, as Christ was, we see, willing to teach, and as God is, we know, willing to hear.

Secondly as to the place of teaching, Jesus "went out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore." We read many times of our Lord's entering into a synagogue; and many times also of his teaching, as here, in the open air. And hence some have sought to justify that irregular kind of preaching which takes place amongst ourselves, either in the open air, or in any building not set apart for sacred uses. As if the case of a Christian country, abounding with Christian churches, and admitting of their being built to any desirable extent, were to be compared with Judæa, and with the Jews, at the first preaching of the Gospel! As if any human minister might claim the same right, of dispensing with all outward ordinances, as He did, who was Lord not of the sabbath only, but of the synagogue and of the temple, of the mountains and of the sea, of the earth and of the heavens! Well it might become Him to teach, with heaven for the ceiling of his church, and the waves of the sea for his footstool. And yet for us, who have houses set apart for God's service, and ordinances which require us to use them, it would be no less irreverent, than irregular, to desert them for the fields and highways. Nor let any one be perplexed by the reflection here likely to arise, that much good may have come of such proceedings, many sinners have been awakened to a lively sense of the necessity of caring for the soul. No doubt much good has been brought about, by God, from every evil thing that man has been allowed to do. But evil is not the less evil, nor is it any the less by us to be avoided, though good may be known to have come of it. Heartily we may thank God that sinners are by grace brought near to Christ. Heartily we may rejoice, as did St. Paul, see Phil. 1. 18, at Christ having been preached, though of envy, and strife, and contention, though, at the expence of reverence, unity, and peace. We may rejoice that men have been converted by the preaching; but we must neither rejoice in, nor take part with, nor countenance, those who so preach.

To this subject we may, in conclusion, apply the words of our Lord at the end of the parable before us. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Whosoever hath opportunities of knowledge and grace, let him use them to the uttermost for good. Whosoever hath provided for him, as all have, or ought to have, in a land like ours, whosoever hath provided for him a faithful ministry, a decent house of prayer, and ordinances effectual to edification; let him resort to them diligently, punctually, regularly. Let him seek to no other. Let him extend these and their use as far as in him lies to all around him. Let him desire, and pray, and endeavour, that all may be of this same mind. And let him study to win others to it, by proving, in the continual amendment of his life, that he himself hears to the purpose.

Grant, Lord, to thy people, grace, to hear with faith the preaching of thy word; with reverence to frequent thy house of prayer; and to follow, with humility, those true shepherds whom Thou hast appointed to feed thy flock!

Christ answereth why He used to speak in parables.

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

12 ¹ For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, ² By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not un-

derstand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and *their* eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, ³ That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

¹ Ch. 25. 29.

² Is. 6. 9. Mark. 4. 12. Luke 8. 10. John 12. 40. Acts 28. 26. Rom. 11. 8.

³ Luke 10. 24.

§ 48. *The blessing of knowing and believing in Christ.*

At the end of the parable of the sower, our Lord, before He has explained it, is asked by the disciples, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" "Because," saith He, "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Parables, that is, were well suited for a sort of hearers, of whom one portion was willing to receive, and the other determined to reject, what was said for the benefit of all. For their obscurity excites the attention of the one, and is made an excuse for ignorance by the other. And it affords not an excuse only, but also a punishment; preventing them from knowing without painful attention, that which they will take no pains to learn.

And further, lest we should suppose that knowledge is given to one, and withheld from another, without ground of reason; it is added, that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." To you who are duly disposed, shall more zeal, more knowledge, be imparted, by the very same teaching, which bewilders those who desire not to learn, and takes away what little knowledge they have. "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing see not." Not simply because they see not, for this might have been no fault of theirs. But because "they seeing see not;" that is, having sight, use it not, having the power to see, are blind wilfully. And so also "hearing;" having the power to hear and understand, they wilfully hear not, and understand not. Wherewith we see fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, see Isai. 6. 9, 10, that they had closed their eyes on purpose, lest they should see with them, and lest they should be converted, and lest God should heal them. Thence our Lord, comparing his disciples with these unbelieving Jews, pronounces their eyes blessed, because they not only have power, but inclination also, to see; and their ears, in like manner, because they hear. And not so only; not only were they blest as compared with such as were unwilling to believe, but in preference also to those holy men of old, who had the desire to see, and hear, the things they saw and heard, but had desired in vain. Their faith in a Saviour to come might indeed be counted to them for righteousness: but much less correct must have been their views of holiness, much less bright their hope of heaven, much less distinct their notions of a Saviour, than those which might be enjoyed by the disciples of Christ Himself.

Great as was this privilege, great the blessing of thus enjoying the presence of Christ, yet, if we rightly view our own condition, we shall find it scarce less worthy of our devout thankfulness. Nor does it demand less urgently our most earnest exertion. We see not indeed what they saw. But notwithstanding we have in our hands, before our eyes, and addressed continually to our ears by the church, the very words of Christ's teaching, the very parables He spake. We may know, as certainly as if we had seen and heard, the things which our Saviour either said or did, so many of them, at least, as He has judged it necessary for our use to have recorded. We may know them as certainly, nay, in some respects, more profitably, than the multitudes to whom they were first addressed. For we have the advantage of the writings of the apostles, and the experience of the whole Christian church, and above all the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, to guide us to a right understanding of his will. Thus we may both know better, and believe more. Thus we may be blest with a more right apprehension of truth in the mind, and a more devout love of it in the heart.

Let us then be ever on our guard, lest we seeing see not, or hearing hear not. Let us be aware, that our own attention, and willingness, depends the degree of profit we shall derive from his word. Let us apply all we see, and all we hear, to the case of our own conscience, and the nourishment of our own souls. Let us pray ever unto Him who alone can give it, that to us it may be given to know, to our eternal benefit, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And above all let us hear with faith. That the word, being "mixed with faith," Heb. 4. 2, may spring up in our hearts unto everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ explains the parable of the sower.

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth

for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

§ 49. *The bounty of the heavenly sower.*

The seed here sown is the Gospel, "the word of the kingdom." The sower is our blessed Saviour; who by Himself, and by his ministers, deals it forth with unsparring hand to men of every variety of disposition. If then much of it be wasted, the fault is not in his bounty, but in the perversity of those on whose hard hearts it falls. Some receive it as by the way side; that is, on a beaten or trodden roadway, where there is no prospect for it to root, but rather for it to be picked up and devoured. These are they, whose thoughts are so trained in the ways of the world, and their hearts so hardened by pride, or any other deadly sin, that though the most urgent appeal of the Gospel be made to them, it finds no entrance to the soul, but is caught away by the wicked one, who there seeks his prey.

Some receive the word as in stony places; that is to say, in a situation where some little soil is found, amongst a profusion of stones and rubbish. These are they who have some faint and feeble good purposes, with an excess of such as are vain and sinful. At the moment of hearing the word of the kingdom, they are moved with a feeling of concern, and renew their resolutions of a more holy life. But the slight growth thus rapidly engendered soon ceases for want of soil. The heart is not deeply affected, is not converted truly unto God. Their resolutions therefore fail in the trial. The sunshine of prosperity, or the storm of affliction, easily make to wither their short lived proficiency.

Some receive the seed as among thorns; that is, among evil habits, which like thorns, or other pernicious weeds, exhaust the strength and fertility that should be employed in bearing good fruit. Such thorns, such weeds, are the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches. And observe, Christ says not "riches," but "the deceitfulness of riches." Men may have them, without being deceived by them into loving them. So also He says not this world merely, but "the care of this world;" that too fond anxiety for the good things of it, that too busy thought for the morrow of it, which are apt to engross our attention. These are weeds, which though for a time they seem subdued under religious conviction, yet grow up again and choke the word, ere it bring forth fruit unto perfection. Not that they do always prevail; not that the stony ground is always barred; not that the beaten road is never made to flourish. With man these things are impossible. And not more folly would it be for us to cast seed on such spots as these, than, by any skill or effort of our own, to aim at recovering such disorders of the soul. But the heavenly Sower can soften even the stony heart, can cleanse the conscience that is else most foul, and can restore to its first simplicity the soul that is most backneyed in guile and sin. Even these can He make fruitful. Even to them therefore is the good seed by Him imparted. Even to all, in nations favoured, like our own, with the full light of the Gospel, even to all is it given to know his will, and to bear, if it be not their own fault, fruit unto perfection.

But above all to the good ground is it given, to those who hear the word, and understand it, and obey it, and, according to the measure of their grace and ability, bring forth their fruit in due season. Here we ought to note the importance of understanding aright that word which we have the happiness to hear. And thankful we ought to be that God deigns to accept not those only who bring forth an hundredfold, but sixtyfold also, and even thirtyfold. Let not us despond then, though we fall short of many, whose higher proficiency we hear of, or behold. It is for each to do what each is able. The heavenly Sower is no hard master. He knows how much every one is capable of; and will look for fruit accordingly. Less than this let us not think to offer. And specially let us beware of excusing ourselves, in any single point of negligence, by the plea, that though our practice be faulty, at least our heart is sincere. As the good ground is that which bringeth forth good fruit, so is that heart only reckoned right with God, which is moved to obey through faith in Christ. If the practice be sinful, the heart is much more sinful. And if it be so, we do but aggravate our sin, by presuming to consider it as good. Let us confess rather to a heart of stone, and pray God to soften it; to a heart corrupt and treacherous, and pray Him to make it true, and pure, and good.

The parables of the tares among the wheat, grain of mustard seed, and leaven.

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three † measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

¹ Mark 4. 30. Luke 13. 19.
wanting a little more than a pint.

² Luke 13. 20.
³ Mark 4. 33.

† The word in the Greek is, a measure containing about a peck and a half,
⁴ Ps. 78. 2.

§ 50. *The growth and wide influence of a holy life.*

The parable of the tares being explained in what follows, we will consider now the comparison of the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed. This is said to be "the least of all seeds," that is to say, a very small seed. "But when it is grown up, it is the greatest among herbs," that is, a very great herb; as it is still found to be in the east, where these words were spoken. "And becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Such has been the church of Christ, which is here meant by "the kingdom of heaven." The professed disciples of Christ were, for a while, fewer in number than the members of any one of the false religions, then prevalent in the world. Yet from this small beginning did there grow, as was here foretold, what might be compared to a lofty tree, a place of shelter and repose for multitudes. Would we then find rest unto our souls, in the midst of this world's vanity and cares? Let us seek it in that church of Christ which is invisible. Let us join ourselves, in heart and mind, to that secret company of faithful men, who form the body whereof He is the head, see Col. 1. 18, the tree of which He is the root. See Isai. 11. 10. Few though they may be, and slight the comfort which their society may be thought to afford; they are in the sight of God as the greatest among herbs, the chief among the children of men. And the faith they live by, though at first it take up but small space in the heart, displaces in the end all other motives, and spreads itself entirely throughout the soul.

The same notion is next set forth under an image still more familiar. If "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," Gal. 5. 9; if so small a portion, as we know suffices, put into three measures of meal, that hide and bury it, has yet a secret power to make the whole ferment like itself; in like manner, argues our Lord to his disciples, shall the word which you preach, and which you are bound to adorn by holiness of life, bring over to the same heavenly condition the whole mass of mankind. Thus are the preachers and professors of the Gospel encouraged to go on unto perfection. Whilst they, who would oppose and gainsay it, are warned, that it is sure notwithstanding to succeed.

According to this account of the progress of Christianity, how important is the conduct of each single Christian, to the edification of his neighbour, and of all mankind. As the virtue of the leaven is communicated by degrees, from one particle of the meal to another; so was the knowledge of Christ at the first spread abroad; so must we now maintain, and promote amongst each other, true faith in Him, and devotion to his service. As each portion of the mass serves, when good, to assist in the working, or, when bad, to prevent its success; so may each individual amongst ourselves, if faithless, hinder the zeal of the rest, or if devout, help forward their proficiency. First we act on those most near to us; on those we live with and love most intimately. Through them we have influence on their friends, and again through them on theirs. Our sins then never come single. Besides offending God, we hurt also our neighbour. We do, as far as in us lies, by every act of transgression, hinder the salvation of them that witness it. Besides sinning ourselves, we encourage them to sin. Besides perishing, we lead them to perish.

Let us on the contrary endeavour to be as good leaven. Let us aim to spread abroad the love of Christ, by feeling it more deeply, and shewing it forth more faithfully, ourselves. And each occasion we have, to say, or to do, any thing that is good, any thing we may know to be his will, let us rejoice to think, that in obeying it, we shall provoke unto good works, see Heb. 10. 24, in our several degrees, not our friends only, and neighbours, but all mankind.

Christ explains the parable of the tares.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are

the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹ Joel 3. 13. Rev. 14. 15.

|| Or, *scandals*.

² Dan. 12. 3.

§ 51. *That God permits evil in order to greater good.*

In the parable of the sower, "the seed is the word of God." Luke 8. 11. Here we read "the good seed are the children of the kingdom." In one case the seed means that which is sown. In the other it means that which comes up. It is the Gospel that is sown. Faithful and good Christians are what spring up from it. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." He both sendeth forth his word, and sendeth grace into the hearts of them who hear, that they may grow therein. Thus it is that Christ soweth. Satan meantime is sowing bad seed. And thence grow up "the children of the wicked one." Thence grow up all kinds of vain religion, all idolatry, and heresy, and schism, all corrupt will worship, all spiritual ignorance, all spiritual pride, with which the world, and even the church, has been overrun. This is described as being done "while men slept;" that is to say, through their own fault, for want of pains, and diligence, and watchfulness. For since, by means of the prophets and apostles, all mankind might have retained, or renewed, the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son our Saviour Christ; it follows, that their falling away into so grievous error must be set down to their own perversity or neglect. Much more among Christians, for such as know Christ, and profess to serve Him, for these, by the indulgence of any wilful sin, to become children of the wicked one, is sure proof that they are little on their guard, that they are spiritually asleep. Let us then take care, that, when awake, we sleep not; cease not to watch against Satan, and against sin. And whereinsoever we have been overtaken by this fatal slumber, let us listen to the voice that still graciously proclaims, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Ephes. 5. 14.

"When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." The abominations of infidelity and sin continue even in the prevalence of the Gospel, and are by its very excellency made more evident. The servants of the householder are surprised at the appearance of the tares. And when informed that it was done by an enemy, they eagerly propose to go and gather them up. They receive for answer, first, that this would be bad for the wheat: "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." And in the next place, it is signified, that if only they wait patiently for the harvest, the tares will then be sure to be gathered up and burnt. "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels;" who shall gather out of Christ's kingdom "all things that offend." And "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Now from all this we may do well to learn, first, that evil, though permitted by God, is never actually done by Him. Whatsoever then of evil we behold around us, let us remember always, it is "an enemy hath done this;" an enemy, who might have been prevented, but who is allowed, by divine wisdom, to work for a time. Further, let us learn hence, that evil is permitted for the sake of good. It is better for the wheat that the tares should for the present remain. What indeed should more excite our zeal than the consciousness that there are gainsayers of our faith, ready rashly to censure it for our faults, or to be converted, it may be, through our piety and prayers. And so it is with the other evils we have around us. How could we be temperate, if never tempted to exceed? How forgiving, if never tried by injury? How, if never afflicted, "patient in tribulations?" Rom. 12. 12. How, if all alike were worthy of our regard, could we, in our conduct, imitate that heavenly love, which maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. See Matt. 5. 45. Thus may we often see, how good is, in this world, brought to pass from evil. Though the evil, all the while, we should remember, is not the less evil, because some good, or much good, may come of it. The tares are not the less tares, nor the less devoted to be burnt, though it be good for the wheat that they grow together for a time. For here we learn, that as "the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world." Then shall the separation be made for ever. Then shall it be no longer good for the wheat to dwell with the tares. But whilst "the wicked shall be turned into hell," Ps. 9. 17, "the righteous," that is, they who through faith have "wrought righteousness," Heb. 11. 33, "shall shine forth as the sun," through the merits of Christ, "in the kingdom of their Father."

The parables of the treasure, the pearl, and the net.

44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore,

and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

§ 52. *How much we must both sacrifice and do for Christ's sake.*

Here we have three more parables, designed yet farther to make clear to us the nature of the kingdom of heaven, or, in other words, of the Christian dispensation, of holiness here, of heaven hereafter. First it is precious as treasure, difficult to find "as treasure hid in a field." And so great should be our joy at meeting with it, even as of a man, who thus finding treasure, "goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Many times he may have passed near to it, and never thought of its being there. Many times, nay at all times, is the kingdom of heaven not far from every one of us that are Christians. See Luke 17. 21. But how often is it unheeded! How often lost for want of diligence and zeal in the search! Let us delay no longer. Let us seek it first, before all things. And having found it, let us sell all that we have, and buy that field. Let us readily count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. See Phil. 3. 8.

And lest we should think, that, like hid treasure, it may be found by mere hazard, without any toil or pains of ours, we have next set before us the example of a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls. Like his must be our search, laborious, anxious, persevering. Like him, when we have discovered this pearl of great price, we must spare no cost, however great, to obtain it. In this indeed both the parables agree, that if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven, if we would have grace to serve Christ on earth, or hope to reign with Him in heaven, we must here grudge no price however high, no sacrifice however precious. Whatever be our besetting sin, that sin we must resolve to part with; and not resolve only, but strive, and wrestle, and pray; and through prayer, and grace, and patience in well doing, must perform what we resolve. We must make good the price we have to pay, however hard this may be to us, however worthless compared with what we pay it for; we must make good the price we have to pay, or how can we expect to possess the precious pearl of holiness, the hidden treasure of eternal life?

So worse than worthless is profession without practice, that the highest Gospel privileges will increase our condemnation, if our lives all the while continue evil. For, again, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Under the Gospel, both wicked men and good are included, in the same visible church of Christ. The obedient, and the disobedient, are both as in the same net, having a community of doctrine and of ordinances, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephes. 4. 5. But observe the consequence. Better were it for the evil to have been never in the net, than to be caught, only to be thrown away. Better for the wicked to have been never called Christians, than to have borne the name, only to disgrace it; only to be, so much the more certainly, cast into the furnace of fire, where "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Let us never then be encouraged in any known sin, by the reflection that it is of common occurrence among those who are called Christians. Many are in this net now, whom the angels must hereafter sever "from among the just." And shall we venture to run the risk of this condemnation?

At the end of these parables, our Lord remarks how many things must be well understood, and remembered, by a competent minister of the Gospel; by "a scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." Such an one is here said to be like a householder "which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." He should have the learning of past ages, and the knowledge of the present. He should know well the volume of the Old Testament, and the full meaning of all that is in the newer covenant. And these things he should be able to bring forth, that is, to express, to explain, to enforce. Who then, we may well ask with the apostle, "who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2. 16. Certainly not they, who with no previous study, take to themselves the preacher's office. Let us be thankful that we are members of a church, in which pains are taken, that they who teach others, should be themselves instructed, though compassed with the like infirmities, yet instructed carefully unto the kingdom of heaven.

Christ is contemned of his own countrymen.

53 And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 ¹ And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works?

55 ² Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses,

and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?

57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, ³ A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

¹ Mark 6. 1. Luke 4. 16.

² John 6. 42.

³ Mark 6. 4. Luke 4. 24. John 4. 44.

§ 53. *The danger of familiarity with things sacred.*

Nazareth is the place called our Lord's "own country," because here He had chiefly dwelt. * Here therefore He was known before the commencement of his ministry; and here we might expect He would be the more highly esteemed in its progress. The people of Nazareth were however no more than "astonished." They asked in scorn, as we may well do in reverence, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" How could it be that One, of birth so lowly, of education so mean, should confound the wisdom of the wise, and speak "as never man spake?" John 7. 46. How could He, were He merely the son of Joseph, thus cast out devils, make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, heal lepers, nay, and forgive sins also? Obvious it is to us, as it should have been to them, that He, who did these things, was the promised Messiah, the Saviour of mankind. But they of Nazareth argued from what they supposed of his parentage, against what they knew of his words and works. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" Thus they were "offended," or led to stumble, "in him." Thus did their familiar acquaintance with his circumstances, and connexions, prove a hindrance to their receiving his testimony and truth. To them therefore He applied justly the reproachful proverb, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." From them He justly withheld the benefit of his healing miracles; "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Hence we learn the dangers that attend on a familiar acquaintance with sacred things. Familiarity is, we know, said commonly, to breed contempt. And so will it be found to do, unless we watch to the contrary, in our habitual acquaintance with things spiritual. Each time we hear or read God's word, if we read or hear without attention, we shall be so much the less likely, the next time, to use it with reverence or profit. Each time we kneel down to pray, if, whilst the lips repeat our prayers, the thoughts are wandering, and the heart insensible to any spiritual want, we shall find it so much the more difficult, the next time, to worship in spirit and in truth. Such is our great danger in the frequent use of religious ordinances. Yet if we use them not frequently, we are sure to be lost. We need to use them therefore with most careful watchfulness against this very thing. We need to use them, not less frequently, for that would itself be sin; but more devoutly, for so might we best hope to sin less. We cannot be too familiar with them; if only, as we know them better, we love them more; if we pray more heartily, and hear more anxiously the words of life, and cling more fondly to the hope of heaven, and trust more faithfully in the blood of Christ.

For it is not whether we know these things or not, but whether we believe in them or not, that makes the whole difference. No one knew better than the men of Nazareth, the words, and the works of Jesus. Yet none less believed in his being the Christ. None were more adverse to admit, that beneath his lowly form, was "the desire of all nations," Hag. 2. 7, the Saviour of the world. Let us observe then the consequence of their want of faith. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." So will it be also with ourselves. If in our hearts faith be wanting, from Him will no virtue come forth to save. If we trust not in his power, and love not, in return for his surpassing love, no wonder that neither is our corruption healed, our blindness cured, nor our perverse lives conformed to his will. Nor can we expect either that in our death his arm will be held forth to help, or his voice in mercy say to us "Arise." If He do not in us now the mighty works of grace, neither will He do then those of mercy and salvation. Remember that in both cases the fault, if we fail, is entirely our own; it is because of unbelief.

God grant, that the more we know, the more we may be disposed to believe! God make us, in our prayers, and in the study of his word, to go from strength to strength; the more we learn, the more to reverence, and the more we reverence, the more to love!

John the Baptist beheaded by command of Herod.

1 At that time ¹ Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus.

2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works \parallel do shew forth themselves in him.

3 ² For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

4 For John said unto him, ³ It is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, 'because they counted him as a prophet.

6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask.

8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

¹ Mark 6. 14. Luke 9. 7.

\parallel Or, are wrought by him.

² Luke 3. 19.

³ Lev. 18. 16. & 20. 21.

⁴ Ch. 21. 26.

§ 54. *That the progress of sin is rapid.*

Herod has only now heard of the fame of Jesus, being among the last, as it should seem, in all his dominions, whom these great tidings reached. For high rank and station are in many things less favoured than the lot of poverty. And in this sense it is most true that the Gospel is preached to the poor, namely, that these have often a larger, usually at least an equal, opportunity, of knowing, and serving, and pleasing, God. In the remark of Herod to his servants we see the force of an evil conscience. "This is John the Baptist," John whom the guilty ruler had put to death, lives ever active in his memory. John is the name most ready on his lips, to account for any thing that is strange and awful. So is it of all whom men injure whilst on earth. Easily as they, at the time, forget the wrongs they inflict on each other, by slander, deceit, oppression, or neglect; the hour is not far distant, when they will rise up in the awakened imagination, and fill with horror each impenitent offender.

Herod had put John in prison, out of resentment for the righteous testimony of the Baptist, against his living with his brother's wife. He had, it is true, spared the life of his prisoner; but that, out of no regard to mercy, only because "he feared the multitude." In what followed, we see how easily such motives as the fear of man may induce us, not to spare, but to destroy life; may help us, not to obey, but to transgress God's will. On Herod's birthday, the daughter of the very woman in question, dancing according to the custom of the country before the company, pleased Herod so highly, that "he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask." How sinful was such a promise on such an occasion! especially in one, whose station made him master of the lives of others! How sinful such an oath to confirm a sinful promise! to be pleaded as the excuse of so sinful an act! "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger," is the request of the daughter according to the previous instructions of Herodias. "And the king was sorry," not out of regard to John, for before "he would have put him to death," but sorry, as before, to offend the multitude. His worldly sorrow was, however, like his worldly fear, of no avail, against another worldly motive, false shame. Such was his deference to the company who heard him promise with an oath, that "he sent and beheaded John in the prison." As if Herod could be paying any true respect to the presence of his subjects, by putting one of them, without law, to death! As if he could be counted to honour God in keeping his oath, when he kept it by an act which was no less than murder!

In this history we should be careful to observe how rapid is the progress of iniquity; from wrong, to anger at being taxed with it; from anger to oppression, from oppression to murder. Let us beware then of all false pleas by which sin seeks to excuse itself in our eyes. Let us be persuaded that no sin is of small account. Let us set ourselves against the first beginnings of offence, under a wholesome dread of the like enormity in sin; remembering that, according to the Gospel we profess, "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." 1 John 3. 15. And in the conduct of the daughter of Herodias, we have like warning of the lengths to which we may be drawn, if we once suffer ourselves to please men rather than God. St. Mark, 6. 25, observes, that "she came in straightway with haste;" being urged, probably, and overruled, as well as instructed, by her mother. But in no case is such urgency, however earnest, any excuse for our violating, in the slightest particular, the known will of God our Saviour. For herein too is our rule most plain, his law most full and comprehensive, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Matth. 10. 37.

God give us the grace to prefer, in our apprehension, the prison of John to the throne of Herod! God make us willing to suffer wrongfully, rather than do wrong! rather than take our brother's life, to lose our own!

Christ feedeth five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes.

13 ¹ When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

15 ² And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

¹ Mark 6. 32. Luke 9. 10.

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

² John 6. 5. Mark 6. 35.

§ 55. *That God filleth the hungry with good things.*

At the tidings of John's death Jesus departed from the place where He then was. He departed into a desert place; going by ship along the coast of the lake, in order the better to escape observation. Herein He set us an example of due prudence, in avoiding, when we may honestly and safely, any threatened persecution. The people, however, followed Him on foot; that is, as He advanced by water, they went after Him on the shore, "out of the cities." Our Lord, though desirous with all meekness to withdraw from persecution, was ready also to leave his retirement for the purpose of doing good. He went forth therefore from his solitude in the wilderness, and seeing the multitude, "healed their sick."

And next He works a miracle, of which the healthy also partake; willing, perhaps, that they, who witnessed his mercy in others, should share also in his bounty themselves. It was evening, and the multitude had no meal to partake of. The disciples therefore proposed to send them away, that they might go, and procure food in the surrounding villages. "But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat." This He said, both knowing how little food they had at hand, and trying whether they would notwithstanding obey his word. They answer, as though informing Him, what they might have been sure He well knew, Master, "we have here but five loaves, and two fishes." So little preparation had they made for themselves! So frugal was the fare with which our Lord and his disciples were content! "He said, Bring them hither to me." However small our store, however slight our means, we are none the less bound to offer them to Christ; to place them, by a due disposal, as in his hands, to be distributed to those who most need their use. "And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass." No further preparation was required of them, in the meal they had now to partake of, than to expect with faith, and to receive with humility. Such also is the most fitting disposition we can attain towards enjoying the bread of life. The multitude being thus prepared, He "took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." It was for Him to pronounce a blessing; it is for us devoutly to ask one, on the food we receive at his gracious hand. Let us henceforth ever when we eat, first look up to heaven, in prayer; that what we receive abundantly we may use temperately, and so improve by God's good gifts, at once in health of body and of soul. "And they did all eat, and were filled." All of the same meal, all of the same loaves and fishes. Let us learn hence to be content with such plainness of food, as makes least waste of God's creatures; that instead of spending our superfluity on ourselves, we may, by frugality and care, be enabled to distribute it more widely amongst others.

In this miracle, for further practical improvement, we should acknowledge the same Almighty Power which at the first made all things of nothing, which still giveth to the seed its increase, and to which it is alike easy, to feed with a few loaves so many thousands, or all living creatures with the fruits in their seasons. But chiefly, should we hence take occasion to observe, the ability and the readiness of God, to feed, and to fill, all those, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. In all that befalls us, in all we have to do, He distributes to the faithful this bread of life eternal. He filleth us with righteousness; with grace, to lead a holy life, nay with righteousness that is by faith of Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. Let us neglect no occasion of this heavenly nourishment. Let us endeavour to derive it from all his dispensations, whether of abundance, or of want, whether of gifts bestowed, or for a time withheld. Let us ask for it in prayer, as for our daily bread; and partake of it habitually, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to the everlasting comfort of our souls.

Christ walketh on the sea to his disciples.

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23 'And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind || boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

34 ³ And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Genesaret.

35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out unto all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

¹ Mark 6. 46.

² John 6. 16.

|| Or, *strong*.

³ Mark 6. 53.

§ 56. *That our safety through God's mercy depends upon our faith.*

The disciples are constrained to get into a ship, and the multitudes are, at the same time, sent away, lest probably they should be too eager to thank the disciples, or the disciples too ready to accept their praise, for distributing the miraculous meal. Let us learn the less to regret, if oftentimes when we do good, we lose the praise of men. It is Christ who for our benefit withholds it, that we may set our whole affection on his praise; that we may ascribe unto Himself that good, which through Him we are enabled to do. Afterwards, we read, "he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." Though engaged in the most active social duties, He found time, and He would have us find time, to go apart continually to pray, to commune with our own hearts as in the solitude of night.

Meanwhile the ship which carried his disciples, "was in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves." "And in the fourth watch," that is, in the last quarter, "of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." And this we find set down in the book of Job, 9. 8, as a singular instance of divine power: "Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea." The disciples so little thought it possible of our Lord, that "they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." In this their terror He addressed them with his well-known voice, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." That voice let us in our spiritual dangers conceive as thus speaking to ourselves. Many times our night of trial may be dark, or the waves of our affliction high. But these things do no more than try our faith. And if only we believe, we have proof in these words of Christ, that He is at hand to help us. Let us then not merely be not afraid, but be also of good cheer. Let us persevere in well doing, with a lively persuasion that we shall have grace to continue to the end, and with a thankful sense of Christ's assistance, by whose strength alone we stand.

St. Peter, by his reply to these encouraging words, shews the eagerness of his temper and affection. "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." He comes down out of the ship, and walks on the water, to go to Jesus. "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid." Wherein we see represented, how feeble is our strongest faith, and how faint our utmost love! Though we set forward, as in earnest, to go to Christ; often, when storms threaten round our heads, we begin, like Peter, through fear to sink. And yet so close at this moment was our Lord to Peter, that "He stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

It was doubting then that made Peter sink. It is doubting that makes us sin. We are not duly persuaded that God will help us, or that his grace is sufficient for us. We doubt whether we shall stand; and because we doubt, we fall. Gracious is God, who, when we fall, again lifteth us up. Gracious is Christ, who, when we begin to sink, stretcheth forth his hand, to catch and save us. Let us join with faith, in the testimony of those who saw these marvels, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Let us endeavour too, with faith, like the men of Genesaret, to bring to the knowledge of his healing love, all whom we see around us to be in need of it. Nothing would so much inflame our desire to make others Christians, as for us to feel duly the high privilege of being so ourselves. It is when we perceive in what peril we have been, and how we have escaped; from what sin, and misery, and death eternal, we have been saved by the grace of Christ; then it is that by prayer, and precept, and above all by the force of good example, we try, most heartily, to win others to salvation.

The Pharisees reprove for their traditions.

1 Then ¹ came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, ² Honour thy father and mother: and, ³ He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father, or

his mother, ⁴ *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 ⁵ *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

¹ Mark 7. 1.

² Exod. 20. 12. Deut. 5. 16.

³ Exod. 21. 17. Lev. 20. 9. Prov. 20. 20.

⁴ Mark 7. 11, 12.

⁵ Isaiah 29. 13.

§ 57. *That no one duty may be pleaded for the neglect of any other.*

The scribes were persons, who, at a time when there was no such thing as printing, wrote out copies of the Jewish Scriptures. Hence they came to set up for interpreters also of their meaning. These scribes, together with the Pharisees, used to teach the people to observe matters that were merely of man's invention, with no less care and diligence, than the law of Moses. Such were some exact rules they made about washing of hands at each meal. They complain therefore to our Lord that his disciples transgress these traditions. He replies, by shewing them that their traditions, not only had no divine authority, but were in some instances contradictory to God's most plain commands.

What duty, for instance, could be more clearly expressed than this, in God's law, "Honour thy father and mother?" Or what offence more plainly denounced than in these words, "He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death." Herein the will of God is evident, that children should in no wise neglect or dishonour their parents, but obey them, cherish them, and, as far as possible, repay the support once received at their hands. "But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me." That is, Ye teach children, instead of assisting their parents, to pretend that they have dedicated their wealth or goods to God. If they have any thing that might be of service to father or mother; instead of giving it them, they may say, according to your teaching, "*It is a gift*," a gift consecrated to God; and so they need not honour, need not aid their parents, and so are free. "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

Most evident to us all must be the falsehood of this plea, the vanity of this excuse. Let us take care then, and be on our guard, not only in this, but in all other matters, against the like self-deception. As the dedicating of our substance to God could not make up for our neglecting a parent's wants, so neither can the performance of any one duty whatsoever, excuse us in the wilful neglect of any other. Yet this we know both has been, and is, a very common case of sin. How many, in former times, and in a corrupt church, used to dedicate, as they thought, to God, for religious uses, the property which should have maintained their families and relations! How many parents now neglect the right training of their children, out of regard to other pursuits of far less deep obligation! How many children too do we see, forsaking their parents in old age, on pretence that they have families of their own to attend to, or that they must provide for their own decent dress and maintenance! Is not this like saying to them, "*It is a gift*," it is devoted to other and better uses, "by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me?"

Thus too in other duties, and in other sins, does the tempter suggest readily some plea of expediency, some more agreeable duty; by dint of which the sinner persuades himself, that he may, in what he less likes, be wanting; or do wrong. What else is it to tell a falsehood, as is many times done, rather than hurt the feelings, or divulge the faults, of a companion? What else is it to profane the sabbath, in order to please a friend or master? What else is it to be covetous, or dishonest, for one's family's sake? to defraud the wealthy, in order to have more to give to the poor, or, by way of edifying the soul, to encourage by our presence the preaching and practice of religious dissension? Whenever we are tempted thus to transgress, let us call to mind the prophecy here applied by Christ to the Pharisees, Isai. 29. 13, "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*" The root of this disorder is in the heart. In the heart must be laid the principle of our recovery. Never have we any duties really conflicting. And in those which may sometimes seem to be so, we shall seldom have any difficulty in deciding, if only we do, in our hearts, in earnest desire to do the will of God.

Christ teacheth what doth defile a man.

10 ¹ And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand :

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man ; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying ?

13 But he answered and said, ² Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

14 Let them alone : ³ they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

¹ Mark 7. 14.

² John 15. 2.

³ Luke 6. 39.

⁴ Mark 7. 17.

⁵ Gen. 6. 5. & 8. 21.

§ 58. *That we should be clean before God in our hearts.*

Jesus had before reprov'd the Pharisees for teaching, as divine "doctrines, the commandments of men." Ver. 9. He now explains more fully, to the multitude, his reasons, for rejecting this particular tradition about washing of the hands at meals. He bids them therefore "hear and understand : not that which goeth into the mouth," as meat for instance eaten with unwashen hands, "defileth a man ; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The disciples appear themselves not to have understood this explanation ; though they reported to Christ, that the Pharisees took offence at its meaning. Our Lord declares, in reply, that, whether they were offended or no, it was necessary to root out every plant which God had not planted, every precept which tradition, and not his law, had established. He bids the disciples therefore to let alone, that is, not to mind, the complaints of the Pharisees. He declares that their pretence to instruct the people was as though the blind should set up to be guides to the blind, which must needs end in the downfall of both.

The disciples however could not yet themselves understand the doctrine in question. That the thing which defiles a man is, not so much what goes into his mouth, as what comes out from his heart, this was a saying so opposed to all their Jewish prejudices, that St. Peter, asking to have it explained, even calls it a parable. Well might our Lord reprove them, asking, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" What indeed can be more clear to our own natural sense, than that the soul within is not defiled, either by the quality of the meat, or by its being eaten with unwashen hands. These washings, had they been, what they were not, of divine appointment, would have availed only to signify the purity of the heart, to express its devotion to God's will. And in any case, to substitute them for this inward service, would be most obvious and offensive hypocrisy. No ; they are the things that proceed out of the mouth, even those which come forth from the heart, these are they that defile a man. They are "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies : these are the things which defile a man." They defile if done. They defile if uttered. They defile though unuttered, though undone, if cherished in the purposes of the heart. For there it is that the Gospel will have us to be pure, there to be charitable, there to be just. There it is, that Christ assures us, He surveys the condition of the soul ; and according to what there He sees, counts us for transgressors, or obedient to his will.

Do we then in our hearts entertain any evil thoughts, any hatred, any selfish lusts, any scheme of malice, falsehood, or deceit, any wish to enjoy what is not our own, or to enrich ourselves at our neighbour's cost ? If we do ; let us be aware, that no outward ceremony can avail to put away the defilement thus flowing from within. God, let us remember, seeth our inmost thoughts, more plainly, than we see each other's outward actions. Let us be assured that, according to these, He both now esteems us, and will judge us hereafter. Whensoever therefore, in the heart, we have purposed evil, let us repent straightway, no less bitterly, no less earnestly, than if we had actually done it. Our hearts have done it. Our souls are guilty of it. And, He, who will hereafter bring us to judgment, He is privy to it. Let us not turn our thoughts with satisfaction, to such things as we do decently, and respectably, such as man may see, and may approve ; but fix rather our attention on what God sees, on what He sees of evil in the heart. There let us check sin, in the outset. There let us repent of it, in its source. There let us serve God, with such fear and love, as no outward acts can signify, no words can adequately express. There let us be washed, not with water, but, through faith, in that blood of Christ, which alone can make us clean.

Christ healeth the daughter of a woman of Canaan.

21 ¹ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

24 But he answered and said, ² I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

¹ Mark 7. 24.

² Ch. 10. 6.

§ 59. *That we should pray with faith through Christ.*

This woman living on the borders of Judæa had both studied the Jewish Scriptures, and become acquainted with the miracles of Christ. Her case is usually considered to have signified beforehand the call of the Gentiles to be the people of God. And it is remarkable that when that call was first proclaimed by Peter to Cornelius, it was introduced by a vision, which declared, that of meats none were common or unclean. See Acts 10. 28. So, here also it was after rejecting certain Jewish traditions about the manner of eating, that our Lord departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and manifested his great power to a Gentile believer. A believer this woman might well be called; for her very first application to Jesus was both humble, and full of faith. She acknowledges Him for the Son of David. She tells Him of her daughter being vexed with a devil, as if fully persuaded that He was both able and willing to cast it out. "But he answered her not a word." Thus Joseph we know made himself strange unto his brethren, see Gen. 42. 17, even when he most purposed to treat them with the utmost kindness. And thus God speaks to the Israelites, see Dent. 8. 2, of having led them forty years in the wilderness, to humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart.

The disciples, not being aware of our Lord's purpose, "came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." Their intercession, it seems, arose, not out of concern for her need, but out of a wish to be rid of her importunity. Thus sometimes amongst ourselves alms are given, more in order to ease the giver, than to help the poor who get them; more to relieve our own selfish feelings, than their afflicting wants. May we learn to deny rather, like our Saviour, and withhold; whenever by so doing we are quite sure that we shall do more good to others, or to those who ask. For thus does He reply to his disciples, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Meantime the poor woman came "and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." Yet once more, as it should seem, to prove her faith, and to make it further manifest to the disciples, He replies now distinctly to herself, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." For so did the Jews esteem, and call also, all other nations, as compared with themselves; themselves God's children, and all others no better than dogs. And this was well understood by this woman who lived on their borders; and who, whilst in humility she ranked herself among the dogs, yet begged also, with all faith, for the dogs' portion, "the crumbs which fall from their master's table." "O woman, great is thy faith," is the praise which followed on these words. And the blessing, hitherto withheld, is now graciously conferred; "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

In her then it was faith that paved the way for success. In her was eminently justified that saying of our Lord, see Matth. 11. 21, that, if his mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented at the sight. In her was the door opened to the Gentiles; and that way of repentance and faith laid down, by which we ourselves have been admitted to the promises of Abraham. Let us remember then how deep is our obligation, to imitate this signal pattern of true faithfulness. Let us imitate it especially in our prayers, in our application to Christ Jesus for his healing grace. However little at the first our petitions may avail, let us never relax in their urgent utterance. Let us never doubt but that the fault, if any, is with ourselves. Let us never fear but what God, if He for a time withhold, does so only that He may in the end more effectually bestow. Thus let us pray ever with that lively faith, which neither fails, nor faints, under the sense of refusal. Thus let us pray ever with the firm conviction, that though we are among the most unworthy of God's creatures, yet even for the dogs there are crumbs, even for the most unworthy there is mercy, through Christ, on their repentance and amendment of life.

Christ feedeth four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes.

29 ¹ And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

30 ² And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:

31 Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

32 ³ Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should

we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full.

38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

¹ Mark 7. 31.

² Is. 35. 5.

³ Mark 8. 1.

§ 60. *That notwithstanding all hinderances we should persevere in doing good.*

Before, when the five thousand were fed with the five loaves and fishes, our Lord had first healed the sick amongst them. See ch. 14. 14. Here also they are made to wonder at witnessing "the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel." It is when we are most deeply impressed with God's great power, then it is that we are most fit objects of his surpassing goodness. It is when we are most sensible of his readiness to heal our infirmities, then also are we most meet to receive from Him our daily bread, the strength to lead a holy life. Now too, as before, they had been a long time waiting, even three whole days, attending on the divine Teacher; till at length they had nothing left to eat. Yet did they not complain of their hunger; but left it for Jesus first to say, "I have compassion on the multitude." Thus also if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, taking no too anxious thought for this world's food, thus shall we ever find that God Himself thinketh of us, careth for us; and that, in such manner and measure as is most for our good, all these things will be added unto us. See ch. 6. 33.

The disciples are still backward in ministering to the wants of the multitude. They first plead that it is impossible to find "so much bread in the wilderness." They next state how very small is the stock they have with them of their own; "seven loaves, and a few little fishes." Thus do many, when invited to do good, plead, either their own inability in particular, or the general difficulty of success in well doing. Let us learn, from this example, to attempt, with good will, whatsoever Christ plainly bids us, and let us be content to leave the issue in the hands of Him, who has proved in these signal miracles, that He can "prepare a table in the wilderness." Ps. 78. 20. In the barren desert of this world's evil, He has means to work out good; to feed the hungry, to relieve the sick, the ignorant to instruct, and sinners to guide into the way of salvation. Let us rejoice to bear a share, however humble, however in our apprehension ineffectual, let us rejoice to take the part He gives us in works so excellent, towards ends so great. Let us come forward though but as with seven loaves, and a few little fishes, though with ever so small resources of our own in comparison, let us come forward, in our several stations, to relieve the misery that is in the world through sin. God it is who giveth the increase; even He, who out of no more provision than this, satisfied four thousand men, besides women and children; even He who hath assured us by his apostle, in regard to every good work we take in hand, that "in due season we shall reap if we faint not." Gal. 6. 9.

"And they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full;" one for each loaf that was broken. In the former miracle, twelve baskets of the fragments were collected, one for each apostle that ministered. These circumstances thus recorded, in proof of the abundance of the meal, may teach us also, in the first place, to avoid waste in all things. If they, who might have recourse to a power so boundless, as that which could thus multiply the loaves, if they were, notwithstanding, to be diligent in collecting the fragments; how much more should we, whose means are limited, who see around us want and wretchedness far beyond what we are able to alleviate, how much more should we take pains, that no crumb be wasted of the bread God giveth us, no trifle spent in vain enjoyment, out of the means He has intrusted to our stewardship! And secondly, we may be hence encouraged to give liberally, and cheerfully, on the ground, that what we so distribute will be largely restored. He that hath pity on the poor, is considered to be lending unto the Lord; and look, what he so layeth out, shall be paid him again. See Prov. 19. 17. The fragments shall be as much as, nay more than, the loaves. They shall be gathered for him against a time when he will more deeply need them. They shall be laid up for him in heaven for ever.

The Pharisees ask of Christ a sign from heaven.

1 The ¹ Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather*: for the sky is red.

3 And in the morning, *It will be foul weather* to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

¹ Mark 8. 11. Luke 12. 54.

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have taken no bread.*

8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

² Ch. 14. 17.

³ Ch. 15. 34.

§ 61. *That we need not more signs, but more inclination to believe.*

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were two sects most opposite to each other; but they agreed heartily, we see, in persecuting and tempting Christ. Would that they, who ought to work together for good, were as often, and as thoroughly of one mind, as are they who are in league for evil! Would that there were amongst honest men as much true honour, as there is of that which is false, amongst thieves! as much of unity amongst Christians with each other, and amongst members of the same church, as we find to our cost, amongst the enemies of both!

These tempters of Christ ask Him for a sign from heaven, for such a sensible manifestation of heavenly power, as should leave them no room to doubt. He reminds them, that they had already signs enough for conviction. For since, even in so uncertain a thing as the weather, they were accustomed, from the appearance of the evening sky, to say whether the morrow would be fair, or foul; they might certainly, from what they had now seen of Jesus, conclude whether He were the Christ or not. Hypocrites therefore He called them, because they pretended to ask a sign from heaven, to convince them; when in reality they did not choose to be convinced. One sign only He tells them they should have, not from heaven, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. This He had before proposed to them; ch. 12. 40; adding, that “as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Nor does He now any farther explain this sign; having said enough to prove to them, when He should have risen from the dead, that He now foreknew, what would then take place.

Having departed out of the way of the Pharisees and Sadducees, He took occasion to warn his disciples against their perverse disposition, bidding them beware of their “leaven.” Meantime they had forgotten to take with them a supply of bread. And from his mention of the word leaven, they hastily concluded that He referred to this neglect of provision for the body. So much more readily do the thoughts of men turn to things carnal, than to things spiritual! to the food of the body, than to the nourishment of the soul. How soon, as our Lord reminds them, how soon had they forgotten his two miracles, of feeding many thousands, on a few loaves and fishes! Never let us be guilty of the like forgetfulness! Never let us, in our too anxious provision for the flesh, fail to remember that God careth for us!

And let us beware of the doctrine of these Pharisees, of their hardened unbelief, and of the specious pleas they urged to justify themselves before Christ. No excuse can be more vain than to say, that we would believe better if we had signs more plain; than to imagine we should better obey, in some circumstances of more forcible conviction, than those which we here enjoy. These thoughts are a kind of leaven, which, if we once admit it into our hearts, will soon corrupt the whole practice of our lives. If we neglect any single duty, on the ground that we do not plainly enough know it; if we are content, instead of doing, to imagine what we would have done, if we had been taught just as ourselves could wish; how closely do we resemble those, who refused to believe, without a sign more manifest from heaven! how easily may we, in like manner, go on to allow ourselves, in whatsoever we have a mind, either to neglect or to transgress! Take heed then, and beware. Admit no such plea into your thoughts. Own that you have signs clear enough, and motives strong enough. And confess, that what is wanting is in your own inclination; not on the part of God, but in yourselves.

The people's opinion of Christ, and Peter's confession of Him.

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, ' Whom do men say that I the Son of man am ?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist : some, Elias ; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, ' Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood hath

not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That ' thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 ' And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

¹ Mark 8. 27. Luke 9. 18.

² John 6. 69.

³ John 1. 42.

⁴ John 20. 23.

§ 62. By what rule we shall be bound or loosed hereafter.

We should observe here, that the true nature of our Lord was made known to the disciples only by degrees. At first they took Him for a distinguished Prophet. But when they had seen his many miracles, and heard his divine teaching, it was time they should be aware that He was the Messiah. Whilst some then took Him for John the Baptist, some for Elias, and some for Jeremias, or for some other prophet, St. Peter is enlightened to reply, in behalf of the apostles, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And thus to Christians, as they grow up in years and grace, are new views of their Lord's character continually made clear. For a time they are apt chiefly to regard Him as a prophet, a teacher of God's will, a revealer of God's truth. But in the end they must know Him, and own Him, to be Himself the Son of the living God ; the Priest, who has once for all made atonement for their sin ; the Christ, the King, whom they must in all things obey.

Simon Peter was, for this confession of faith, very highly praised by our Lord. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." He was blessed, because the Almighty Father had revealed to him this truth. For it is not for our own words, or works, or thoughts, that we are blest ; but for those which God reveals to us, and which, in us, are his. Our Lord next alludes to the name Peter, which signifies a rock, given to this apostle when Christ first beheld him. See John 1. 42. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Upon thee, confessing me to be Christ ; upon thee, and on the rest of the apostles, maintaining this same confession, I will raise the faith of my disciples ; whom St. Paul afterwards described as being "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Eph. 2. 20. "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The enemy of man's salvation shall never prevent there being a succession of believers in this truth, to the end of the world. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Thou shalt open the door of faith by thy ministry ; as Peter we know did especially, both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. See Acts 10. 5, and 15. 7. "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Whatsoever thou shalt pronounce lawful or unlawful, a duty or a matter of indifference in conformity to the will of God, shall be so esteemed at the day of judgment. Which power of binding and loosing, as well as the keys of the kingdom of heaven, our Lord here probably meant to extend, as He does afterwards, see ch. 18. 18, to the rest of the apostles, and through them to their successors for ever. Whence we learn that we should look to what they taught for instruction, as to what we are bound to do, or not to do ; for information, as to what will let us into the kingdom of heaven, or shut us out of it. "Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." And this, no doubt, He ordered them, lest the Jews, in their jealousy, should attempt to put him to death before his hour was come.

Many obscure and vain questions have been raised, as to what degree of authority St. Peter had here given him above the rest of the apostles. That he had no such supremacy, as is contended for by the Church of Rome, is sufficiently established by other passages of Scripture. For us it will be more profitable to observe, first, that the foundation of our religion, is a right faith in Christ, as the Son of the living God, as One able to atone for the sins of the whole world. And, secondly, we may here note, that, in order for us to be saved by his atonement, in order for us to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, we must be influenced, whilst on earth, by that rule of life which his apostles have laid down for our direction. That rule they left on record in this New Testament on which we now daily meditate. That rule they appointed others to teach after them ; ministers, whose authority, according to their degree, all are bound to receive, and to respect. For according to what these enforce, agreeably to God's word, as either bounden or forbidden, will all mankind be bound or loosed, when Christ Himself shall come to judgment.

Christ foresheweth his death.

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

24 ¹Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man

will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

¹ Ch. 10. 38. Mark 3. 34.

² Psalm 62. 12. Rom. 2. 6.

³ Mark 9. 1. Luke 9. 27.

§ 63. *The value of the soul.*

No sooner were the apostles enlightened to know that Jesus was the Christ, than He put their faith to trial, by assuring them that He must at Jerusalem "suffer many things," and "be killed." They were labouring under the false notion that Christ was to give dominion, in this world, to the people of the Jews. And Peter accordingly comes forward, with the like zeal as before, but with far different judgment, taking upon him to say, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." To this speech Jesus replies as though it had been uttered, as well as suggested, by Satan himself; adding, to Peter, that he was no longer, as before, under the influence of divine revelation, but savouring the things that were of men. And then, to prevent them from thus reckoning on temporal prosperity, He declares to his disciples: "If any man will come," that is, is willing to come, "after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." No words could more plainly express that his kingdom was not of this world. No language could more plainly forewarn his disciples to the end of time, that they should seek as their reward something further than the comfort or advantage which their faith and devotion may in this world yield.

Three things our Lord here requires of whosoever would come after Him. First, that he deny himself, that is, thwart his own inclinations, always when they are wrong, and often by way of exercise when they are comparatively right. The second is, that he take up his cross, that is, cheerfully undergo vexation and persecution, when he cannot without sin avoid it, purposely encounter inconvenience and pain, when he must else do less good, or attain less virtue. The third is, that he follow Christ; that is, walk in the steps of his example, in temperance and purity, in faith and devotedness, in meekness, and forgiveness of wrongs, in going about to the uttermost to do good, to neighbours and strangers, to friends and foes.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it." Whosoever grudges health, or strength, or life itself in my service, shall lose eternal life. "And whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it;" that is to say, for ever, in heaven. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" So greatly does the value of the soul exceed all things this world contains. "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If the soul be lost, what has he to offer for its redemption? No earthly treasure can in its stead avail. No wealth the world contains can be counted for an equivalent. For all these things, however large, however valuable for a time, are doomed to come soon utterly to an end. Whilst the soul of each single human being will endure beyond the end of worlds, even for ever and ever.

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." This it is which makes the soul of such supreme importance; there is to be a day of judgment. This it is that makes of trifling value all this world has to give; we shall receive hereafter, not according to what here we have, but according to what here we do. Herein will the sovereignty of Christ be exercised; herein the self-denial of his saints approved; the life they lose, be found; the cross, they bear, become a crown of glory. Oh, what, compared with bliss in heaven, what is life on earth! How vain its utmost satisfactions; how hard to gain, how swift to pass away, how soon to cease in death! And death, how bitter is its draught to drink, for them that have no hope in Christ! How sweet its taste, how welcome its arrival, to them that die in the Lord!

Let not, Lord, our thoughts savour of the things of men, but of the things of God! Let not us be ashamed of thy cross, or refuse to take it on ourselves! But deeply impressed, by thy words, with the necessity of caring for the soul, let us endeavour, and pray, above all things, that through Thee, it may live for ever!

The transfiguration of Christ.

1 And 'after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

5 ' While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud over-

shadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

¹ Mark 9. 2. Luke 9. 28.

² 2 Pet. 1. 17.

§ 64. *That the glory of heaven is not far from every one of us.*

Our Saviour, in the last chapter, forbade his disciples to be expecting through his means any earthly dominion; and He promised them, at the same time, that some standing there should not taste of death, till they had seen the Son of man coming in his kingdom. This promise He is considered to have fulfilled in what is called his transfiguration. And herein He gave them also, it should seem, some intimation of what it was He meant by "his kingdom." Ver. 28. For in his transfiguration there was an outward sensible change, of that natural body which He had as the Son of man, to a glorified body, such as the Son of man now has, such as will hereafter be the form of "just men made perfect." Heb. 12. 23. In so much of this glory as mortal eyes might see, did He for a time appear, to Peter and James and John, on mount Tabor. And with Him were seen Moses and Elias; representing to the apprehension of the Jews the connexion of the Law, and the Prophets, with Christ.

This heavenly sight afforded to the chosen apostles an earnest of the glorified state to which they should themselves aspire. And Peter, forgetting what was yet first to be suffered in Jerusalem, exclaimed, in the eagerness of his zeal, "It is good for us to be here." Fain would he have set up his rest at once, in the enjoyment of that heavenly vision. His answer comes not from Jesus Himself, but from a voice, such as on some other occasions, had communicated, under the dispensation of the Law, the will of God to man. "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." In which injunction, the apostles were instructed to acquiesce cheerfully in what our Lord said of his sufferings. And we also, as well as they, are here plainly taught, both that Jesus is the Son of God, and that it is God's will we should in all things hear Him. This instruction having been given, the whole vision ceased. "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." They are then charged to tell no man what they had seen; and this was ordered lest the multitude, on hearing of so great glory, should be the more confirmed in their false notions about the kingdom of Christ, and be the more offended in the shame of the cross.

The whole history should serve to make us aware how real are spiritual beings, how much nearer to ourselves than we are apt in our faint faith to imagine. Our senses, whilst they serve to discern this world's objects, form a thick veil against the perceiving things heavenly. It needs but for this veil to be withdrawn for a moment, and we too should with the prophet behold the chariots of fire, see 2 Kings 2. 11, which wait to protect the servants of the Most High; we might be conscious of the presence of Moses and of Elias, of Peter and James and John, and above all, of Christ Himself. With face shining as the sun, and raiment white as the light, we might see Him conversing, in love, with the hallowed forms of his prophets and apostles. We might hear the heavenly voice proclaim, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." To all this we might in one moment be brought; for to all this, and to much more than this, death might as in one moment bring us.

Let us then, whilst life and sense continue, strive to feel these things by faith. Let us, by all we read and hear, try to make that faith more lively, more effectual. Let us design for ourselves no tabernacle, no resting place, on earth; but set our whole affection on that which is beyond our sight, and beyond our very heart's conception, eternal in the heavens. And especially, for the exercise and proof of our faith, let us make earth like to heaven in the holiness of our lives. Let us live, as He would have us, who is in heaven. As his holy Spirit here would guide us, so let us follow into all truth, and all good. Let us listen, though we hear no voice, let us listen as though we heard it, let us listen, in all we say, and do, and think, to the voice of God's beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Christ speaketh of John Baptist as Elias ; healeth the lunatic.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, ¹ Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

14 ² And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, ³ If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

¹ Ch. 11. 14. Mark 9. 11.

² Mark 9. 17. Luke 9. 38.

³ Luke 17. 6.

§ 65. *That faith is most effectual to success in the Christian life.*

The disciples appear to have been now near to being convinced that their Master was "very Christ." Acts 9. 22. For they ask Him how that could be, before Elias appeared again openly in the world. "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" This saying of the scribes was founded on the prophecy of Malachi 4. 5: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." And this expectation our Lord here in some measure confirms, saying "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." Which words may seem to signify, that either Elias, or some one of his spirit and power, shall, in some way unknown to us, prepare the chosen people, for the second coming of the Lord in his great and dreadful day. Meantime our Lord tells us, that "Elias is come already," meaning John the Baptist, who, as the angel described him to Zacharias, went before the Lord their God in the spirit and power of Elias. See Luke 1. 17. "And they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed;" that is, have used him with what cruelty they pleased. By which last words, the disciples understood that he spake of John the Baptist, of whom He had indeed previously said, "This is John the Baptist which was for to come." Ch. 11. 14.

All things then which the Scriptures had said beforehand of Christ's coming, were fulfilled in the dispensation of the Gospel. All things which are set down as hereafter to happen, will in like manner be fulfilled, when He shall come again to judgment. This is the chief practical use we should make of prophecy already accomplished. We should take it for an earnest of the certainty of what has yet to take effect. Surely as John the Baptist preached, and was followed by the manifestation of Jesus of Nazareth, so surely will the first coming of our Lord, to save the world, be followed by his second coming, to judge the quick and the dead. Let us therefore lay to heart the certainty of that great and dreadful day. Let us set before our eyes the fear of it, for a guard against the deceitfulness of sin. And for this end, let us endeavour always to regard it with such faith as is described in the passage which ensues.

The disciples had in vain tried to cure a lunatic; one, who, as it appears both from this passage and from St. Luke's account of the matter, see Luke 9. 39, was afflicted at certain seasons of the moon with the falling sickness. Their failure arose from this, that both in themselves, and in the friends of the person afflicted, there was a want of faith. "O faithless and perverse generation," is a reproof which seems to have been addressed to both parties. And to the disciples, who asked privately, "Why could not we cast him out?" Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief." He then assures them, that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed, that is, ever so small a degree of real lively faith, they should be able to remove mountains, or in other words, to do miracles as marvellous as the moving of mountains; for nothing should be impossible to them. He adds, however, that for working signs and wonders so great, they had peculiar need of fasting and of prayer. In the times when miracles were vouchsafed, the faith required, in those who wrought them, was a firm conviction that they should be able so to do. Ours is a work scarcely less wondrous, to deny the flesh, to renounce the world, to resist the devil. And for success, we have like need of a firm persuasion, that we have power from on high to succeed. A lively assurance to this effect, founded on a right view of the promises of God, is genuine Christian faith. Let us then believe that we have grace to conquer, and behold, we through grace are conquerors. Let us believe; but let our belief be no vain presumption. Let it be sought diligently with fasting and with prayer; with a studied watchfulness, denying ourselves such things as we have a mind to, with frequent and fervent petitions for such strength as we have none of in ourselves. So shall we in our faith be humble; in our failings hope for pardon; and in our best success, ascribe to God, the glory of that work, which is not ours but his. *

Christ payeth tribute by a miracle.

22 ¹ And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received ||tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest

thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find † a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

¹ Ch. 20. 17. Mark 9. 31. Luke 9. 44.

|| Called in the original *didrachma*, being in value fifteen pence.

† Or, a *stater*. It is half an ounce of silver, in value two shillings and sixpence, after five shillings the ounce.

§ 66. *The rule of Christian payment.*

Again and again does our Lord remind his disciples, that He must be "betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." There was no point which they were so reluctant to believe, as that He should suffer, and none which He was more anxious to impress upon their minds. "And they were exceeding sorry." They were grieved for Christ's sake. And as they understood not how, by his death, He would for them secure life eternal; they were grieved further, at having their expectations of glory in the present life thus completely overthrown. Let us take warning, lest, even in our religion, we look too much at "the things which are seen," 2 Cor. 4. 18, at the advantages it confers in this present world, instead of at the prospects it affords for the next. Let us remember that we must suffer with Christ, if we would "be also glorified together." Rom. 8. 17. Providence does no doubt, in many things, allot prosperity to the righteous. But who shall say that he deserves this title? Who dare murmur, though the most severe dispensations of wrath were to befall himself? He, in whom was found no guile, was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Isaiah 53. 3. Much more may we reasonably expect to be chastised with pain on earth, before we are raised up to joy. Let not us then be "exceeding sorry," but rather "glory in tribulations." Rom. 5. 3. Let us be glad of all the ills which God thinks fit to deal to us; trusting that through his grace they will work together for our good, and striving that they may do so, by our "patient continuance in well doing." Rom. 2. 7.

"And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?" This was a sum collected for the service of the temple. And from this question, our Lord first took occasion to intimate that He was the Son of God; reasoning, that as earthly kings take not tribute of their own children, so neither ought He to be asked for tribute towards the service of his heavenly Father. And in the second place, He wrought a miracle, and paid the demand; that He might give the Jews no needless cause of stumbling, or offence. The apostles, who now knew that He was the Son of God, would have known Him to be justified in withholding the tribute. The Jews, who were ignorant of this truth, if He had refused, would have ascribed his refusal to treason against the Most High.

And here observe, that the Saviour of the world, and his chosen followers, had not wherewith to pay this small demand, without recourse to a miraculous supply. Whence we should learn to attach less importance, than we are apt to do, to the possession of this world's wealth. We cannot indeed, like our Lord and his apostles, be independent of the means which wealth affords. We cannot, like the primitive Christians, practise such community of goods, or meet with such universal hospitality, as with them rendered money next to needless. But we should take care not to overrate its importance. We should "take heed and beware of covetousness." Luke 12. 15. We should check in ourselves a taste for such conveniences, as, requiring more expense than we can properly afford, render us too anxious to increase our store, too ready to sacrifice to considerations of income, the principles of faith and duty.

And however small our means may be, we should learn from the instance set before us, always to discharge all just demands, and sometimes to satisfy even those which are not strictly due. This latter we should do, when it may be done without injustice to others, rather than cause scandal to a fellow creature; rather than excite anger and enmity, rather than bring disparagement on the Gospel we profess. How much more should we pay all just debts! how much more "owe no man any thing;" Rom. 13. 8; how much more incur no debt, which we have not the ability to pay, and withhold no payment a single day beyond the time when it is due and asked for!

God grant that they, who profess the faith of Christ, may by no eager haste to gain, no backwardness to pay, no grudging when constrained to lose, offend the gainsayers of the truth! God move our hearts to give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow not to turn away! rather than wrong, to suffer wrongfully, rather than rob, to starve!

Christ teacheth to be humble, and to avoid offences.

1 ¹ At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, ² Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

6 ³ But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a

millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

8 ⁴ Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee! it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

¹ Mark 9. 33. Luke 9. 46.

² Ch. 19. 14. 1 Cor. 14. 20.

³ Mark 9. 42. Luke 17. 1, 2.

⁴ Ch. 5. 30. Mark 9. 45.

§ 67. *The pattern of Christian humility.*

The question, as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, shews that the disciples, under that name, were still reckoning on dominion and authority, such as prevails in this world. But Christ meant, by that kingdom, the reign of grace and holiness in the heart, the reign of righteousness, that should begin on earth, and endure in heaven for ever. In order further to make this clear, and at the same time to shew the vanity of the question proposed, He "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them." He then solemnly declared it necessary, for us to be so changed, as to become like little children, ere we can enter into the kingdom of heaven at all; and added that he should be therein deemed greatest, who should here most humble himself like that little child.

It was of precedency in the kingdom of heaven that the apostles disputed. We ask perhaps more commonly, who is greatest in the kingdom of earth? We inquire, who is most wealthy, most exalted in rank? We desire to have the preeminence over each other, in honour, or place, or condition. Even to such questionings as these, we may apply the answer of Christ. We may learn from it the vanity of all earthly ambition. We may see in it that pride, be the matter what it may we would be proud of, does but degrade us in the true judgment of God, and that "before honour is humility." Prov. 18. 12.

But chiefly is this true in regard to spiritual attainments, in regard to the kingdom of heaven, in regard to faith, and hope, and charity, in regard to that crown of glory, and those many mansions in our Father's house, which are provided for them that love Him. Of these things, we must with shame confess, it is not uncommon for Christians to be proud. In these things it is indeed well that we desire to be the first. But, let us remember, if we would really be so, we must here deem ourselves, behave ourselves, as the last. A little child must be our pattern. To be converted, and to become as little children, must be our rule. Has an infant wealth? He is unaware of its value. Has he rank? He has no sense of its distinction. Has he the gift of more than common ability? He is unconscious of its preeminence. Has he a more than common share of that grace, which is, we trust, even in infancy effectually conferred on such as are brought with faith, through baptism, to Christ? Still does he run no risk of being exalted above measure; for he knows not the Spirit that is in him. So also whatever gifts of grace we may trust we have received of God, we must feel in point of pride as if we knew not of them. We must be converted, that is, changed, into this childlike temper, to know nothing of ourselves but our own wants and weakness, to look for nothing, but the least and lowest place, in our heavenly Father's house.

High is the esteem, in which our Lord declares, that He will hold Christians such as these. All who treat them kindly, He will count as thus receiving Himself. And most fearfully has He warned all, against ill using them, against offending them, that is, causing them, by ill treatment, or by any other means, to offend. For the word "offences," as here used, means a stumbling-block; something in one person's conduct which causes another person to stumble, or to fall, or to transgress the will of God. The woe here denounced against the world, proves how hateful in God's sight are these snares of transgression. Yet some men lay them purposely for each other; making a mock at sin, and making sad, if it be possible, the heart of the righteous. See Ezek. 13. 22. Let us take watchful heed lest we do so inadvertently; lest, by our words or actions, we lead others into evil, or dishearten them in good. And let us be on our guard against taking, as well as against giving, offence. And whensoever we feel ourselves in danger of being thus made to fall; let us put away from us the ground of temptation. Though it were a hand, or foot, or eye, or friend, more valued than all these, that tempts us to the breach of Christian duty; that member let us cut off, that eye pluck out, that friend, however dear, renounce, unless rather, with all these retained, we would prefer the portion of hell fire. This that we might escape, Christ gave for us, not hand only, and foot, but all, even Himself, on the cross. This that we may be saved from, through Him, what is there we ought to grudge of our own?

Christ teacheth how to treat the meek, and those who trespass.

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

11 ¹ For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

12 ² How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

15 Moreover ³ if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him

alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in ⁴ the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an ⁵ heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, ⁶ Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

¹ Luke 19. 10.

² Luke 15. 4.

³ Lev. 19. 17. Luke 17. 3.

⁴ Deut. 19. 15. John 8. 17. 2 Cor. 13. 1. Heb. 10. 28.

⁵ 1 Cor. 5. 9. 2 Thess. 3. 14.

⁶ John 20. 23. 1 Cor. 5. 4.

§ 68. *Church discipline and church unity.*

The little ones here spoken of are children who are entitled, according to this exhortation, to the very tender regard of Christians. Hence we may apply profitably what is here said to such Christians, as are like to children, in point of humility. These are often thought little of by the more confident professors of faith; who, conceiving themselves in all things right, look down with contempt on the conscientious scruples of the humble. Christ therefore here gives us very solemn warning, that we take heed, and despise not any one of them. He states also two reasons for such caution. First, because little as they esteem themselves, and of small account though they may appear to us, there are angels who watch over their souls, angels who all the while incessantly behold the face of the Almighty in heaven. Secondly, we should consider, that it was for such as these that Christ died, for He came "to save that which was lost." The more abject they feel in themselves, the more deeply they humble themselves in his sight, the more they deplore their corrupt nature, depreciate their best works, and heartily repent of their manifold sins; they are the more exactly in the case of those whom Christ came to save, they resemble the more closely that lost sheep, among the hundred, whose finding gives more joy to its owner, than the possession of the rest of his flock. Take heed then, not only that ye make them not offend, but that ye do not so much as despise one of these little ones, of whom God so earnestly desires that they should not perish. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Eph. 6. 4. Never be induced to shock the conscience, or to slight the value, either of a child, or of a childlike Christian. Let his feelings, his habits, his very scruples be sacred in your sight. Scoff not, smile not, at a pooriness of spirit, to which it might be well for yourselves to attain. Nor dare to aggravate the burden of a cross, which you should rather assist to bear.

And according to the kind treatment we have ourselves, as lost sinners, thus received of God through Christ, should be the tenor of our own conduct, to such as trespass against us. "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." A private, friendly, and frank remonstrance, is the most likely of all methods to convince them that they have done wrong. And for our encouragement, we may consider that we shall then have gained our brother, won him to the confession and reparation of his fault, won him from continuance in sin to repentance and amendment of life. Or if this plan fail, we should next make our complaint in the presence of some one or more chosen friends. That the charge thus laid open, before witnesses, may less admit of doubt or disputation. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it," says our Lord, "unto the church." In which words, and in what follows, He points plainly to the discipline soon afterwards established, whereby the church used to bind or loose, that is, to censure or forgive, the faults of its members.

Greatly it is to be regretted, that such discipline is amongst ourselves discontinued; that it should have now been made impracticable, partly by the religious indifference, and yet more by the religious disunion, of the professed members of the church of Christ. Great is the inducement He has here set forth for us, to dwell together in unity. If we are but agreed on earth, as touching any thing that we shall ask, it shall be done for us, of our Father which is in heaven. If we are but gathered together in the name of Christ, bound into one company by communion of Christian faith, then is He in the midst of us. Earnestly should we endeavour to promote the consummation of such union as this, throughout the Christian world. Thankfully should we reflect that in our churches and families, somewhat of such union has, by God's grace, been preserved. We are agreed touching what we shall ask, we are gathered together in the name of Christ; and so surely as we are so, He is in the midst of us. Oh may our souls be conscious of his presence; our prayers be earnest for his grace; our faith enlivened by his gracious promise; and our love enlarged by his unbounded love!

The parable of the king who took account of his servants.

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? 'till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand || talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and † worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred

† pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their Lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

‘ Luke 17. 4.

|| A talent is 750 ounces of silver, which after five shillings the ounce is 187l. 10s.

† Or, besought him.

‡ The Roman penny is the eighth part of an ounce, which after five shillings the ounce is sevenpence halfpenny.

§ 69. *That we should forgive as we have been forgiven.*

St. Peter seems to have thought that he offered much, in proposing to forgive his brother until seven times. “Until seventy times seven,” is the reply of our Lord; signifying, that we should forgive over and over again, without limit. Thus oftentimes when vainly we imagine that we have purposed or done some acceptable duty, we should feel, if we but felt the spirit of this answer, that we are at the best unprofitable servants.

This reply our Lord enforces by a parable, in which we may first remark the proportion between our trespasses against God, and those of men amongst each other. They are as ten thousand talents to an hundred pence; as a sum which exceeds the largest fortune, to one which may be earned readily by any man. No proportion can indeed adequately express what is due from a creature, who offends, to a Father who preserves, supports, and bears with him; from a bondsman, to a Redeemer who died for his sake; from a sinner, to the Holy Spirit who makes him holy. Whilst our own petty grievances, what are they at the utmost, but trifles, which an hour may make nought, together with the life, nay the world, in which they take place? When we think how few and evil are our days, see Gen. 47. 9, how short our pilgrimage, and how full of sin; we should be ashamed ever to forget Joseph’s counsel to his brethren, “See that ye fall not out by the way.” Gen. 45. 24. Next we should note, in this parable, the supplication of the servant, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” He asked only for time. He thought, it seems, and so vain man too often fondly trusts, that he might make amends in the future, for the faults of the past. But the lord of that servant knew, better than he, what relief was really needful for him. He loosed him, and gave him more than he asked for, even forgave him the debt. This it is that God has done for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. This it is He still doeth, still offereth to do, in the final day of judgment; even to remember our sins no more. Our pride leads us to think that we can make amends for ourselves. Our heavenly King, whom we could in truth never pay, at once to make us humble, hopeful, and thankful, looseth us, and forgiveth us the debt.

But how now does the servant treat his fellowservant? Does he cheerfully remit those few poor pence, which are all that the utmost grievances between man and man can be deemed, in comparison, to amount to? Nay, he will not give his debtor so much as time. He will not listen to the very prayer he had himself before put up; “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” The covetousness of man insists on punctual payment, his offended pride demands full satisfaction, or his inflamed anger thirsts for retribution and revenge. Would he not then be justly visited by the wrath of his heavenly Lord, and delivered to the tormentors, till he shall pay all that is due? In the last place observe, that though this debt had been once forgiven the servant, it is imputed to him again to the full. So likewise, let us remember, will our heavenly Father do also unto us, if we forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. He has indeed once for all forgiven us through Christ, whose death is an atonement for the sins of all. Yet for the very sins, once forgiven, must we expect, according to this parable, to be called again to account, if we ourselves forgive not. His pardon is free, and we, through his grace are free; only not free to sin, only not free not to forgive. *

May the sense of the love we have received constrain us out of love, rather than fear, to love, to help, to forgive each other! May we discharge from our hearts, if yet we harbour there a thought of bitterness, may we discharge it from our hearts for ever!

Christ answereth on divorcement and on marriage.

1 And it came to pass, ¹ that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan;

2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read ² that he which made *them* at the beginning made *them* male and female.

5 And said, ³ For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and ⁴ they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, ⁵ Why did Moses then command

to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 ⁶ And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

11 But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

¹ Mark 10. 1.

² Gen. 1. 27.

³ Gen. 2. 24. Eph. 5. 31.

⁴ 1 Cor. 6. 16.

⁵ Deut. 24. 1.

⁶ Ch. 5. 32. Mark 10. 11. Luke 16. 18. 1 Cor. 7. 11.

§ 70. *How we must deny ourselves in all things for Christ's sake.*

The coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan were the part of the country first occupied by the Jewish tribes. It was to be expected, therefore, that Jesus would there preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. "And great multitudes followed him." Many probably in those parts frequented his teaching; and many also of his former hearers went with Him over Jordan. "And he healed them there." He exercised in all places, with equal ease, and with equal grace, his power of miraculous healing. "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him;" that they might find somewhat to lay to his charge. With this view they questioned Him, in a matter much debated among themselves, what cause might justify a man in putting away or divorcing his wife. Christ refers them to the institution of marriage, as set forth, in the case of our first parents, at the beginning of the book of Genesis. He points out how God had sanctioned marriage, by making at the first one man and one woman. He mentions, as said by God, what Adam appears by God's direction to have repeated, Gen. 2. 24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." From whence it seems to follow, that the new connexion, for which the old one is relinquished, must be as binding as the other, nay more binding. So that a son can no more cease to be his parent's child, than a husband the spouse of his wife. As also our Lord here concludes, from their being pronounced by God to be one flesh, no man must dare to put them asunder.

The Pharisees next ask, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" Not that Moses had so commanded; he only permitted this course in some special cases. See Deut. 24. 1. But not waiting to notice this misrepresentation, our Lord tells them that the permission, which the Law contained, was an indulgence to the hardness of their hearts. It was one which was not known "from the beginning," that is, before the time of Moses. It was one which they had in practice very grossly abused. It was one which He therefore now limits very strictly in the Gospel to a single and extreme case. How lax must have been the practice of the Jews, if even the disciples could argue from this limitation, that "if the case of a man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry!" As if the most endearing ties were of value only to be exchanged! As if the mutual help and comfort God graciously provided for mankind, were not worth having on the terms He kindly ordered for the best!

To this remark our Lord replies, that a single state is indeed to be preferred, not however as having more of liberty, but as having less. For that state of life is nearest unto heaven, in which there is least room for worldly care, earthly affections, or fleshly lusts. That state, in which we are least likely to love a fellow creature more than Christ, is the fittest to prepare us for a resurrection, "where they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Matt. 22. 30. "All men," our Lord owns, "cannot receive this saying." That is, it is a saying of more than common difficulty; a counsel of perfection, binding not on all, but on them "to whom it is given." It is justly also considered to have been most appropriate to what St. Paul called "the present distress," 1 Cor. 7. 26, the times when Christians were few in number, and persecuted by the rest of mankind. But to all persons, and in all times, it must be profitable from this passage to learn, that even marriage, important as we justly reckon this step in life, weighs nothing as compared with our eternal welfare. For the kingdom of heaven's sake we must be ready, if plainly required, to forego what our hearts most fondly wish. We must deny ourselves, in some circumstances, the indulgence of affections, which in others are allowable, the enjoyment of a condition, which, when duly ordered, serves to signify the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his church. See Eph. 5. 23. And we must learn, whatever be our state, to count all things but loss for Christ; see Phil. 3. 8; and to love neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, husband nor wife more than Him.

Christ receiveth little children, and teacheth the young man the way of life eternal.

13 ¹ Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

15 And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.

16 ² And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, ³ Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honour thy father and *thy* mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

¹ Mark 10. 13. Luke 18. 15.

² Mark 10. 17. Luke 18. 18.

³ Exod. 20. 13.

§ 71. *How we may fulfil the law of God.*

The disciples have here again need to be reminded, how amiable in the sight of God is the disposition of children. For they rebuked the parties who brought them unto Christ. Our Lord therefore replies, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them." These words, taken in connexion with other circumstances, afford considerable sanction to the practice of the church, in infant baptism. And very forcibly do they recommend us, as a point of Christian duty, to aid the helplessness of children, to bear with their waywardness, and to instruct them with patience, kindness, and attention. But chiefly do they enforce the doctrine our Lord had already laid down, that we must be ourselves in disposition like to little children, if we would enter, as we desire, into the kingdom of heaven. And so does St. Paul also exhort us, see 1 Cor. 14. 20, to be children in point of malice, at the very time when he bids us in understanding to be men. For children, we must remember, are by nature no more innocent than ourselves. Only their corruption scarce shews itself in action, by reason of their infant weakness. And besides, it must be considered, in the case of infant Christians, that the grace of God's Holy Spirit, so newly in baptism imparted to their souls, makes them to be, whilst scarcely capable of sin, children of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. It is for us, then, though grown up, and surrounded with the manifold temptations of our several ages, to do no more harm than they, to be like them indifferent to the vanities of the world, unpolluted by the lusts of the flesh, unbeguiled by pride, covetousness, or wrath; but to hold rather, as we trust they do, a communion of dependency and love, with the Spirit of a Father which is in heaven.

"And behold one came, and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" He hoped, it appears, to be told of some one particular thing to do, as a repetition of some one prayer, or a pilgrimage, perhaps, to some one place, or a careful observation of some one ceremony, or a watchful abstinence from some one enjoyment, one thing, in short, he wished to be told of, by the doing of which he might be sure to go to heaven. The reply of our Saviour shews us, that it is not the doing any one single thing, but a disposition to do every thing, and especially that thing which is most hard to us, a disposition to do this, in a devout manner, and on a principle of Christian faith, this it is that qualifies us for the kingdom of heaven.

First, however, our Lord inquires, "Why callest thou me good?" What, that is to say, what mean you by this name? Do you believe me to be, as I am, the holy Being to whom alone the name of good belongs? "There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." For this is the way to prove, that you believe Him to be good who gave them. And if further you would know which commandments, consult the Scriptures, keep those which there you read; as, for instance, those which are set down in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, as having been spoken by the voice, and written by the hand of God Himself. These the young man professed that he had kept from his youth up. He had yet, however, to learn their extent and perfection. He little thought that they implied, what Christ next enjoined him, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." This one thing he yet lacked; for being unwilling to do this one thing, he loved not his neighbour as himself, he loved not God with all his heart. Not that to do this one thing is the sure road to salvation, but that in him it was to be the proof of a readiness to do all things according to the will of God. For the love of riches seems to have been his besetting sin. And whatever be the sin that most besets us, in this it is that we are most tried; in this that we may most try, for ourselves, whether we do indeed in real earnest love God's commandments.

If this doctrine incline us also to be sorrowful, let us strive and pray that it may be a godly sorrow, such as worketh repentance, and amendment of life; that, if we have not yet so loved God, we may love Him now; and that, if we already love Him, we may henceforth love Him more.

Christ teacheth the perils of wealth, and the advantage of forsaking all for his sake.

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men, this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what

shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory,² ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30³ But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

¹ Mark 10. 28. Luke 18. 28.

² Luke 22. 30.

³ Ch. 20. 16. Mark 10. 31. Luke 13. 30.

§ 72. *Reasons for contentment and self denial.*

The young man, who inquired of our Lord the way of life, "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Ver. 22. This led to what may seem a severe remark from our blessed Lord, "That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." How "hardly," is next plainly expressed by a proverb, familiar in a country where camels were in use, and where they were the largest known animal. This proverb shews our Saviour to have meant, that for a rich man to be saved was as hard as any thing can possibly be conceived. So deceitful are riches! So engrossing is the love of them! So apt are they who have them, to trust in them, to be wasteful stewards of God's good gifts, and to forget, in the vanity and selfishness of their hearts, the Almighty Giver! Let those then, who have little, be content with such things as they have. See Heb. 13. 5. Let them be thankful that they are tried, as most men are by God's appointment, in this respect, on easier terms. Let them rejoice to think, that, through the love of Christ, whatever wants they here endure, they want not in the means of grace; they want not in the hope of heaven; "to the poor the gospel is preached." Luke 7. 22. Let those also, who have much, learn hence to be doubly watchful, lest through their wealth they perish; doubly active to improve their talent, in hope of a proportionate reward. For, impossible though it be with men, that they who are so beset with peril should in any case be saved; yet "with God all things are possible." With his spiritual aid, and in the faith of his redeeming love, every trial, alike of abundance or of want, of affliction or enjoyment, may, by his mercy, turn to our profit, and end in our glory.

* Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Thus pleaded St. Peter for himself and the apostles. And though it was but the poor furniture of their humble occupation, their boats and nets that they had left, yet were these all they had. These were no less for them to lose, than for the wealthy would be their large possessions. And therefore does our Lord, who knew their zeal, the signal sacrifices they had yet to make, and the signal service they would hereafter render to the church; therefore does He promise them the most distinguished place, "in the regeneration," that is, in the resurrection, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." Then shall the apostles also be exalted in honour. Then shall they, by their exaltation, judge, that is, convict of wilful disobedience, the tribes of Israel, who like them might have believed. Then shall they, with all that are the saints, "judge the world." 1 Cor. 6. 2. Then shall they preside also over the tens of thousands, who shall be sealed as children of the faith of Abraham, numbered according to the tribes of his posterity, out of every nation in the world.

For to all, in every country, and in every age, to all is extended the like gracious promise. Whatsoever they forsake in this present life for Christ, for his sake, and in deference to his command; whether it be the abundance of wealth, or the bare means of livelihood, their worldly goods, or the dearer ties of their earthly affection, they shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. There many, who are here first, shall be last; many who have now most large abundance, shall be then in deepest need. And the last shall be first; the poor shall be made rich, the lowly shall be lifted up, and the fishermen of Galilee, who, with little to forsake, had yet forsaken all for Christ, shall be enthroned in the kingdom of his glory. Let no one make excuse of having little to give up. Let none despond, as having no offering of value, to present unto the Lord. Offer what you have with fervent zeal. Forsake, with honest purpose of amendment, whatever hinders you in your Christian progress. Plead with God, not your own, but Christ's worth. Plead with Christ, his own, which He has made to be as ours. Believe in Him. Love Him. Love to do what He would have you. You will then be counted, however small your means, to have forsaken much for Christ. And, however here you may be taken for the last, you may hope by Him to be exalted among the first hereafter.

The parable of the labourers hired into the vineyard.

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market place.

4 And said unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give

them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chose.

‡ The Roman penny is the eighth part of an ounce, which after five shillings the ounce is reckoned halfpenny.

† Or, have continued one hour only.

1 Ch. 19. 30.

§ 73. *How the last shall be first, and the first last.*

This whole parable serves to shew us, what is meant by that saying of our Lord, which occurs both just before it, and just after it. "The last shall be first, and the first last." The kingdom of heaven, that is, the dealings of God with mankind through Christ, are compared to those of a householder, hiring labourers into his vineyard. He is represented as agreeing with the first for a certain sum: and then giving the full amount of that sum to all, whether they wrought for him one hour, or twelve. Those who are last hired he pays first. He gives to them as much as he had agreed for with the first. So that when these came to be paid, they murmur because, though they had done more work, they received no more pay than the others. The reply of the householder convicts them of injustice in this their complaint, reminds them that they had just what they had agreed for, and shews them that they had no right to find fault with him for doing what he would with his own.

Thus is it, to apply this parable to ourselves, thus is it in the experience of each Christian community. Christians perform service during periods of very different length; some going to the rest of heaven in early youth, some labouring in the vineyard till extreme old age, some serving God from their youth upwards, some not converted to the ways of pleasantness till their life is far advanced. In all these several cases God doeth what he will with his own; and yet giveth each "whatsoever is right." For He only in any case can determine or discern which of us is fitted, and when, to be taken to Himself. Those of us who have been as it were hired early, who from childhood have been in some sort working in the vineyard, and earning those wages which are the gift of God, should hence learn to be patient in well doing, and content under the continuance of our trials. First though in this sense we be, we shall, if we murmur, if we flag, if we fail continually to improve, we shall be counted for the last. The longer we have known our duty, the more we are bound to do it. More things become sin to us, as we better know God's will. To obey is easier, to transgress more heinous, in proportion as we have been longer in the habits of a Christian life, and are favoured more highly with the gifts of Christian grace. Oh, then, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" 1 Cor. 10. 12.

Secondly, we may hence learn the folly, and the danger, of judging by comparison of ourselves with others. This may lead us to think, both too well of ourselves, and too ill of them. For who shall say, but that they even, who are guilty of notorious sin, may, ere they die, or already whilst we are judging, repent more truly, resolve more heartily, and reform also more largely, in the sight of God, than we ourselves, in our manifold sins, daily committed against Him? Never let us thus compare ourselves with each other! Never let us entertain that jealousy of God's mercy to the chief of sinners, which springs from self-sufficiency in ourselves, or lack of faith in the sufficiency of Christ!

Lastly, we should all learn from this parable, that our heavenly wages bear no such exact proportion to the extent of our services on earth, as we are apt in our pride to imagine. Rather should we consider them to be above all proportion to any service. And so should we more deeply feel them to be the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For whether we be first, or last, so we be but in the end, through his mercy "chosen," the reward is no reward of ours, but his, and his only, who hath bought both it for us, and us for Himself, through his most precious blood.

Christ answereth the mother of Zebedee's children.

17 ¹ And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19 ² And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

20 ³ Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that

I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; .

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the ⁵ Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

¹ Mark 10. 32. Luke 18. 31.

² John 18. 32.

³ Mark 10. 35.

⁴ Luke 22. 25.

⁵ Phil. 2. 7.

§ 74. *The doctrine of the atonement.*

Notwithstanding our Lord's repeated notice of his sufferings, the disciples still understood so little of what his kingdom was to be, that the sons of Zebedee applied, through their mother, to obtain in it the places of most distinguished honour. Our Saviour tells them that they know not what they ask. He informs them that places of honour in his kingdom imply eminence of pains and trouble, drinking of his cup of affliction, and being baptized with the baptism, that is, the sorrow and suffering, He was to be baptized with. And even when they professed cheerfully their readiness to undergo all this for his sake, He adds further, that neither so can He promise them the preference they apply for. For to sit on his right hand and on his left, to be exalted to the highest place of grace on earth or of heavenly glory, is not to be given out of personal favour, or in the way of arbitrary appointment. But it will be dispensed according to the revealed will of God, in proportion to our faith and zeal in his service. It is not, Christ saith, his to give, except to those for whom it is prepared of his Father. And who these are we may learn from another Scripture, "God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. 2. 9.

The rest of the apostles were moved with indignation against these two, for their making this request. To them therefore our Lord next turns, and reminds them, how unworthy is all such jealousy and anger, how unworthy of their Christian profession. In the world, indeed, now generally, as among the Gentiles of that time, high station, and rank, and authority, and dignity, are eagerly and angrily contended for. "But it shall not be so," says Christ to his apostles, and through them to all us his disciples, "it shall not be so among you." Our precedence is to consist, He tells us, in doing most good to each other; in ministering, most humbly and most charitably, to each other's wants and welfare. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Thus did the divine Teacher point to his own conduct, for a pattern of what He would have us do. Thus did He prove to us, that the highest of all dominion is consistent with service the most lowly. For who could be more high than He, the Son of God? Yet who more lowly than that Son of man, who went about doing good, who had not where to lay his head? This then is our pattern. And thus only can we become truly great, when we decline no duty however irksome, no service however humiliating, by which we may do real good to each other.

In the latter words of this last verse, our Lord does moreover very plainly teach the great Gospel doctrine of the atonement. He came "to give his life a ransom for many." A ransom means a payment to redeem us, to redeem us from the captivity of sin and death. This was the chief end for which our Saviour came. This, the very service, and the ministering, by which He became a Saviour unto all. He died for us; the just for the unjust, the righteous for the wicked. He gave his life a ransom for us; that we might through Him be free, free to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. This his great love in our behalf let us now lay earnestly to heart. Let us requite it to the best of our ability, by ministering in like manner to the good of our brethren. Our life we cannot in like manner lay down for others. See Psalm 49. 7. But we should spend it in their service, for their benefit. We should go about doing good. And whatsoever our hand findeth to do we should do it with all our might. We should look not every man to his own things, but every man also to the things of others. See Phil. 2. 4. And the less we are selfish, irritable, or proud, the nearer we shall be to Christ's right hand in his kingdom that shall be revealed.

Christ giveth two blind men their sight.

- 29 ¹ And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
- 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.
- 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.
- 32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?
- 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.
- 34 So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

¹ Mark 10. 46. Luke 18. 35.

§ 75. *That it is through faith we see, and through Christ that we have faith.*

A great multitude, we are told, now followed Jesus; their numbers increasing as they approached to Jerusalem, where it is probable that they looked for something strange to befall Him. He took therefore this occasion of working a very signal miracle on two blind men who were sitting by the way side. Plainly He has elsewhere taught us, in doing good, not to let our left hand know what our right hand doeth. Yet we see here, that, when the glory of God is concerned, the greater the number of beholders, the more we are bound to do good in their sight.

These two blind men were so eager in their application, that "the multitude rebuked them," to make them "hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David." Here we should observe, that in calling Him the Son of David, they did no less than own Him for the Christ. Blind as they were, they had attained a degree of faith such as many failed to feel who had all their senses perfect. So little does true faith depend on ability either of body or of mind! so well fitted for the conviction of all classes of persons are the evidences of Gospel truth! No deficiency of sight, no lack of learning, can exclude either the poor or the blind from the healing mercies of Christ; if only God move their hearts, if only it be their will, and their earnest prayer, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them;" He shewed mercy, because they so readily believed; because they so devoutly prayed; "and touched their eyes." This He did to prove that through the power of his hand they were healed. "And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him." This was the first use they made of their sight, to follow Him through whom they had received it.

No miracle is more suitable than the giving sight to the blind, for illustrating the spiritual effect of the Gospel, on the human heart. By nature we are all heart blind. We are not able to discern our real good from our greatest evil. We can neither find, nor keep, the path which leadeth unto life eternal. Out of all who have this natural defect, many are never sensible that they labour under it. They live in error, and know not that it is error; in sin, and know not that it is sin. Such are the great mass of the heathen. Such are many of the most abandoned of Christians. Such, in many respects, are we all of us; who, however much we know, yet in many things do wrong, and know it not. Some, however, have a worse blindness than this, a blindness which they know of, but prefer wilfully to sight; a darkness they are aware of, but choose purposely instead of light, because their deeds are evil. See John 3. 1, 9. Though Jesus to them offer, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" they have not the grace to answer, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." If even they have heard somewhat of the truth, if even they have suspected themselves to be wrong, they close purposely their eyes, lest they should see more, lest they should see what they like not. They had rather not see, than have to walk in light. And therefore they are not healed.

Meantime there are also some, we trust many, who, being equally by nature blind, yet are earnestly desiring, of the Son of David, that their eyes may by Him be opened. Let us join ourselves to this company of believers. Let us endeavour, as the very ground of our hope of being healed, let us endeavour to have faith in Christ. Then will He have compassion on us, and touch our benighted eyes. Then will He enlighten our dark understandings, enable us to behold a new world around us; in every thing to see God, and his hand ruling over all. Then will appear to us the crown of endless glory, laid up for us in the heavens, there ready for all those who here believe in Christ. Through Him we have received what of sight we have, what of faith in things unseen. Let us be sure to use it in the following of Him. So shall we through Him, and from Him, receive more. And the more we see, the more let us desire, the more let us pray for, of God's good gift; for so shall we still the more receive.

Grant, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened," to behold through faith the things that are invisible; to seek thy will in all we do, to see thy hand in all we meet with, thy chastisements in our sufferings, thy goodness in our joys, and, above all, thy mercy in the saving of our souls!

Christ rideth into Jerusalem upon an ass.

1 And ¹when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me.

3 And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 ²Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

6 ²And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

10 ¹And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

¹ Mark 11. 1. Luke 19. 29.

² Is. 62. 11. Zech. 9. 9. John 12. 15.

³ Mark 11. 4.

⁴ Mark 11. 15. Luke 19. 45. John 2. 13.

§ 76. *How we may best shew forth our own praise of Christ.*

This entry of Christ, into Jerusalem, served to fulfil a very singular prophecy, and at the same time it very significantly represented to the Jews the nature of our Lord's intended kingdom. They expected, after all He had said to undeceive them, they still expected, that if He were the Christ, He would restore their lost dominion, would set them at the head of the nations upon the earth, and would enter as a great conqueror, with the pomp of earthly triumph, into the city of David his father. Yet the prophet Zechariah had very plainly forewarned them otherwise. Zech. 9. 9. "Behold thy King cometh unto thee meek, and sitting upon an ass, and upon," that is, even upon "a colt the foal of an ass." These words were sufficient to have taught the Jews that the Christ would be a very different kind of king from what they were looking for. From the views of earthly greatness, their thoughts should have been turned to the heights of spiritual excellence; and especially to the excellence of meekness and humility.

In order to fulfil this prophecy to the letter, Jesus sent two of his disciples, from the mount of Olives to a neighbouring village, telling them beforehand where they would find the animals that were to be used on the occasion. At the same time He inclined the heart of the owner to part with them readily for his use. Happy was the man who was thus moved to give up without delay what was his own, for the use of Jesus Christ. He saw not who it was that wanted them; but only the two disciples. He knew not for what use they were required; but was satisfied with the message, "The Lord hath need of them. And straightway he sent them." This then should be our sufficient voucher, in any demand that is made on our assistance, towards works of charity or piety. If we be but well assured that the Lord hath need of what we reckon ours, if we but clearly see the way in which it may be given, or spent, most according to his will; straightway we should so spend, so give, so give up all to his service.

And now, every thing being prepared, behold the King enter his own city, riding on this lowly beast! Have we not here a lively image of God visiting his own fallen world, in a form so beneath Himself, that "the world knew him not?" John 1. 10. "And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." May we not here see it represented, that, though the world know not Christ, there is notwithstanding a multitude who acknowledge Him for the Son of David? There are thousands, and tens of thousands, there are, there have been, and there will be, in all ages of the church, who believe truly, who repent heartily, who obey affectionately; with whom Christ Himself ever is, and against whom the gates of hell shall not prevail. Let it be our very earnest endeavour to be joined to this holy company. Let us not be content without a lively hope, without a firm conviction, that we are true followers of Christ. It is not to cry Hosanna, but to pray day and night; that is, to desire in the heart, as well as say with the lips, "Lord save us:" this it is that will make us to be counted for his servants. It is not now to spread our garments on the ground beneath his feet; but to offer them in the clothing of the poor and naked: this it is that He will reckon for the honouring of Himself. Soon will He come again; and that, to judgment. Soon, at his coming, will not the whole city only, but the whole earth also, be moved. And shall any of us still ask out of indifference, "Who is this?" Shall we dare to be ignorant of what He hath told us of Himself, of his divine nature, of his boundless love, of his all sufficient power to save? No; let us be assured that "this is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, of Galilee." This is He, who died for our sins. This is He, through whom alone we have hope of eternal life.

Oh, may we now be moved, by his so great goodness, to believe effectually in his precious death! Oh, that when He shall come to judgment, and many shall still ask in faithless ignorance, "Who is this?" we may have the grace to say, with full assurance of hope, "This is Jesus," our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Christ visiteth the temple; and maketh the fig tree wither.

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, ¹ My house shall be called the house of prayer; ² but ye have made it a den of thieves.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, ³ Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

¹ Is. 56. 7.

² Jer. 7. 11. Mark 11. 17. Luke 19. 46.

³ Ps. 8. 2.

⁴ Mark 11. 13.

§ 77. *That we should pray in faith, nothing doubting.*

The first thing Jesus did, “when he was come into Jerusalem,” ver. 10, was to visit the temple. In no place was He so much concerned, as in the house of prayer, to shew forth his power, and his truth. And nowhere either is He to ourselves so closely present, nowhere so sure to hear our prayers, nowhere so averse to behold iniquity, as in that which is now his temple, the congregation of faithful Christians. Thence He would have us utterly exclude, not only all buying and selling, but all thought also of this world’s traffick, all buying and selling in the mind. To the building in which we worship we should thus apply his plain direction, “My house shall be called the house of prayer.” To it we should thus apply his solemn warning, that we make it not a den of thieves. Let us take heed that we never, when in church, allow our thoughts to wander on any scheme of iniquity. Let us strive never to let them wander at all. If we dwell with satisfaction on our past misdoings, which we should there be confessing, and repenting of; if we are purposing for the future transgressions against which we should be there praying for God’s grace; if we there think of our worldly dealings, or worldly work, or of any thing except God’s service, and the love of Christ, and the saving of our souls through Him; what is this, but to mock at his presence, to rob Him of the honour due unto his name, and to make his temple a den of thieves?

In the temple Jesus healed the blind and the lame. Thus when He receives our penitence and hears our prayers in the Christian congregation, He makes by his power our blind souls to see, and guides our feeble steps into the way of holiness and peace. There too, in the temple, did the children attend, and cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” Wherein we see fulfilled this prophecy, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise.” And further we may hence learn, that we should practise in our devotion, somewhat of a child’s eagerness and sincerity of affection. Not that either they, or we, know how to thank God, as we ought, for his mercy to mankind through Christ. No; but we may hence conclude, for our direction, that He counts that praise for most near to perfect, which like the joyful cry of children is most fervent, thankful, and sincere.

The next morning He made to wither the barren fig tree. In this miracle we have a warning against hearing without faith, or having faith without the fruit of works. “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever,” is the sentence which all must look for, who have no such fruit to shew, when Christ demands it of them. “And presently the fig tree withered away.” And the disciples, though familiar with his mighty works, yet marvelled and said, “How soon is the fig tree withered away!” So little were they acquainted with the extent of his power! So far were they from being aware that He meant to impart of it to themselves! He here assures them, that if they had but faith, and doubted not, they should be able to do like miracles, even marvels as great as the removing of mountains.

To Christians in all ages is extended the promise next following, “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.” See then, when you pray, that you pray with faith; with faith, which looks ever for things spiritual; with faith which makes you ask for such things first; with faith, which nothing doubts but that God will give them; with faith, which waits patiently his good time; with faith, which all the while it waits, is able to rejoice in hope. Sure, as you thus ask, you will receive. Not perhaps just what you ask, or as you ask it. But what He knoweth to be best for you; He to whom you pray; He who is aware both of our necessities before we ask, and of our ignorance in asking; (see Liturgy) He, who, unworthy as are our prayers, vouchsafes to grant them for the worthiness of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (See Liturgy.)

Christ reproveth the Jews by the similitude of the two sons.

23 ¹ And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; ² for all hold John as a prophet:

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

¹ Mark 11. 27. Luke 20. 1.

28 But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 ² For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

² Ch. 14. 5.

³ Ch. 3. 1.

§ 78. *How we may duly estimate our obedience or our sins.*

The manner of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, his healing and teaching in the temple, and his driving away the money changers out of its walls, were matters of so public a nature, that the chief priests and elders might seem justified in demanding, "By what authority doest thou these things?" And no doubt He would have replied to their inquiry, but for some such reasons as these two following. First, they ought long before to have acknowledged his power to be from God. For they might have known it, by his works, to be so. Secondly, they did not ask for information, but with a view to ensnare Him, to frame a charge against Him. For they were persuaded that He had no authority from the Roman governor. And they would have been able, had He pleaded any other, to accuse Him of treason against Caesar. He therefore asks them also a question; which they could not answer, without either owning themselves in fault, or else giving offence to the people. And when to this they refused a reply, He then very justly declared, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Here we see how we ought to meet such inquiries, as it may be inconvenient, or wrong to satisfy. Not by falsehood, not by prevarication, but by some such gentle method of reply, as may point out that the inquiry ought never to have been made.

And further we learn the duty of turning all our conversation to the improvement of those with whom we converse. For so did our Lord, from this ensnaring question, take occasion to bring home, to the consciences of the priests, their guilt in rejecting the baptism of John. He compares them to that one of the two sons, who, in answer to the father's desire that they would work in his vineyard, "said, I go, sir; and went not." They were professors of religion. They pretended to great zeal in the service of God. Yet when John came to them "in the way of righteousness," that is, preaching a doctrine which they might have known to be righteous, they believed him not. "But the publicans and the harlots believed him." They, whose lives were most opposed to the tenour of his preaching, obeyed it in repentance and amendment. "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Not even by this marvellous conversion of those, whom they most took for sinners, were they awakened to repentance and faith.

This comparison between the self righteous and the profligate, as to the readiness with which they enter into the kingdom of God, is frequently insisted on by our Lord. It should frequently, therefore, engage our most serious consideration. A family such as our own, in which the reading of the Scriptures, and the duties of devotion, are openly observed, a family such as this, needs often to be warned, that we are not therefore sure to be more near to God, than such as are reckoned the most profligate of mankind. Better we are, thus far, that our conduct is less wicked in itself. Better too, in this sense, were the scribes and Pharisees, than the publicans and harlots. Their conduct was less wicked in itself, but not less wicked in them, in them who knew so much better, and professed so much more. Many persons, whose case we are apt to think most desperate, may be making, for aught we can see to the contrary, greater efforts to repent; and yielding also more fruit of their imperfect faith, than we who so rashly pass sentence against them. When then we read of publicans and harlots going into the kingdom of heaven before respectable Pharisees, we should lay to heart these profitable conclusions. First, that it is not for our own works' sake, but out of God's free gift, that any of us shall be saved at all. Secondly, that however great may have been our sins, we may be justified, through God's grace, by faith in Christ. And, thirdly, that, when we would estimate our faith by its fruits, we must try our works, not by comparison with our neighbours', but by what we know of God's will, from God's word; and by what we might know of it more, by God's grace, than we do, if we would obey it better, and love it more.

Parable of the husbandmen, who slew such as were sent unto them.

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, ¹ which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; ² come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh,

what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, ³ Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever ⁴ shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

¹ Is. 5. 1. Jer. 2. 21. Mark 12. 1. Luke 20. 9.

² Ps. 118. 22. Acts 4. 11.

³ Ch. 26. 3. John 11. 53.

⁴ Rom. 9. 33. 1 Pet. 2. 7. Is. 8. 14.

§ 79. *How we should render unto God the fruits of holiness.*

The householder in this parable represents Almighty God. The vineyard is here the covenant of his mercy through Christ. The husbandmen mean the children of Israel, to whom that covenant was especially intrusted. The servants whom they killed are the prophets, whom they severally set at nought, or put to death. The son, who was sent last of all, is Jesus Christ our Lord. Him, too, did they cast out, and slay; reckoning thus the more surely to retain the exclusive possession of the vineyard. Yet far other was the fruit of their misdoing, as they themselves, in their judgment of the parable, gave sentence against themselves, that it should be. God took from the Jews his covenant, and bestowed it on a people, namely, the Gentiles, who bring forth, we trust, in some degree, the fruits thereof.

Hitherto the chief priests and Pharisees seem not to have been aware that they were condemning themselves. Christ brings home to them the parable, by adding the words of a prophecy from the Psalm: "The same stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone in the corner." Ps. 118. 22. The builders were the Jews who rejected Jesus; He the stone, who being rejected by them, was received with joy by the Gentiles. And as a corner stone unites the walls of two adjoining sides; so does He unite, in one spiritual building, all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who truly believe in Him. This meaning our Lord makes clear, and the application of the parable strictly personal, by saying further to these chief priests and Pharisees; "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Wherein He very plainly tells them, that they should be rejected from being God's favoured people; and also, that this favour, they were so jealous of, should henceforth be extended to all, who would bring forth fruits worthy of it. Whilst the stone, that is, Himself, the corner stone before spoken of, should be a stumblingblock to the faithless; making them to fall and to be broken. And it should fall also on the rebellious and wilfully disobedient, grinding them to powder, that is, utterly destroying them.

The Pharisees, when they perceived that He spake of them, instead of paying the more heed to his awful words, sought only the more eagerly to lay hands on Him. Such was their aversion to the truth here spoken home to themselves. Let us, on the contrary, search out most diligently, and read most frequently, those places of Scripture, in which our own case is most plainly touched, in which God most plainly reproves our own sins. Let us, in all places also, try to see, what may most apply to our own selves. Even here, where our Lord spake chiefly to the Jews, we may perceive perhaps, if we well examine, that He spake to us also. Are we not, in many respects, rather satisfied with the possession of our privileges, than careful to improve them? pleased rather to count others excluded from God's favour, than anxious to profit by it, to the saving of our souls? And what is this, but to desire to keep the vineyard to ourselves, instead of rendering to its Lord the fruits in their seasons? And what, if we fall away from grace given? What, if we sin wilfully, after having enjoyed the knowledge of the truth, and the good gifts of the Holy Ghost? Is not this to slay the Son Himself? Is not this to crucify our Saviour afresh, and to put Him to an open shame? Ever let us labour faithfully in God's service, acknowledging that the vineyard, we enjoy the use of, is his. Let us ascribe to his goodness all that here we have. And when called on to give it up, let us still remember, that all we then hope for is his gift also. And, above all things, let us reverence his Son. When He hath in mercy sent that Son, to reveal to us his will, let us reverence Him, by doing what He commands. And since that Son out of like mercy died for us on the cross, let us reverence Him, by a devout and lively faith in the atonement of his most precious death.

The parable of the marriage of the king's son.

1 And Jesus answered ¹ and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding : and they would not come.

4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage.

5 But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise :

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth : and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is

ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests.

11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment :

12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment ? And he was speechless.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

14 ² For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

¹ Luke 14. 16. Rev. 19. 9.

² Ch. 20. 16.

§ 80. *How this parable applies to them that are Christians.*

There are three ways in which we may apply the resemblance of this parable to the Gospel of Christ. First, in respect of its being refused by the people who were first invited. This is what our Lord had said not long before, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Ch. 21. 43. For like unto a marriage was that alliance, or covenant of love, to which the children of Israel were first of all bidden. Them did God select, out of all mankind, to be united by faith unto the Messiah. His servants He sent forth, prophets and apostles, and other ministers of the Gospel, to call them which were bidden to the wedding ; to offer first, unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the privilege of being saved through Christ. "And they would not come." They wilfully refused. "They took" also "his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." So the king, that is God Almighty, caused the armies of a great nation to come, and destroy those murderers, and to burn up their city. And then sending among strangers, by whom are here meant the Gentiles, He invited all, both bad and good, to the wedding, that is, to the covenant of salvation through Christ. Thus was "the casting away of them the reconciling of the world." Rom. 11. 15. Thus when they had refused, we were invited to the Gospel feast.

Let us take to ourselves warning from their obstinate refusal, so often insisted on by our Saviour, and always, we may be sure, always for our instruction. Let us apply the parable in the second place, in this other sense, to ourselves. We here sit, in God's world, and in Christ's church, provided for graciously, as at his feast. How deeply does it concern us, to think of that awful day, when the King shall come in "to see the guests !" We are guests collected from the highways, called from the broad path of sin to sit down to a feast of holiness. Ours is now the blessed privilege, that if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall, through God's grace, be filled. Let us take heed that we prefer not farm or merchandise, the profits, or business, or pleasures of the world, to a spiritual communion with God. Hereby we may become, not guests only, but sons of God, joint heirs with Christ Himself. Let us be sure also that we put off "the old man," Eph. 4. 22, and have on the wedding garment, the righteousness which is by faith, and the holiness which comes of faith, in Jesus Christ. Not in what St. Jude, ver. 23, calls "the garment spotted by the flesh," not in our own unrepented sins, nor yet in any vain conceit of such works as we might do without God's good grace. Not in these let us come to the Gospel feast. In no such state as this, let us kneel down to pray, lie down to sleep, or rise up to work. But if we would have the true wedding garment, let us put on that lively faith in Christ, which works in us a fervent love of Him, and a diligent keeping of all his commandments.

In the third place, we may apply this parable, as it has been very forcibly applied by our church, to that sacrament of which our Lord thus sets forth the duty ; "This do in remembrance of me." Luke 22. 19. Here again, many are tempted to refuse, on pretence of farm or merchandise, with excuse of being so engaged in their worldly business, that they have no time to prepare themselves for this heavenly feast. The garment required is repentance and faith, hope and charity, and a thankful heart. They, who will not now put on these Christian graces, have here often much to say, as they reckon, in their defence. Yet hereafter they will be found to be speechless. And little difference will it then make, whether a man be thrust out for want of the wedding garment, or have in no sense entered in at all. In neither case has he any part in the feast set forth.

Christ teacheth to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

15 ¹ Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said,

Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a || penny.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and || superscription?

21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, ¹ Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

22 When they had heard *these words*, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

¹ Mark 12. 13. Luke 20. 20.

|| In value sevenpence halfpenny: ch. 20. 2.

|| Or, inscription.

² Rom. 13. 7.

§ 81. *That our duty to the government is a part of our duty to God.*

In order to understand aright this passage, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Jewish nation was now under the Roman dominion, and had submitted to pay tribute to Caesar the Roman emperor. And this payment was a matter of great annoyance to a people who reckoned themselves to be under the sovereignty of Jehovah alone. For thus they used to speak of themselves: John 8. 33: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." The Pharisees therefore made sure that this question about the tribute must bring our Lord into one of two difficulties. If He were to pronounce the tribute unlawful, He would give offence to the Roman government. And if He were to pronounce it lawful, the people would take umbrage. Here, however, as on other like occasions, He found a way at once to silence them, and to teach them and us an important lesson. For by this time the Roman money, stamped with Caesar's image, was commonly circulated in the country. And this use of it was an acknowledgment of Caesar's sovereignty. When therefore He made them shew Him tribute money, and asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" they were reminded that the money itself was, in this sense, already Caesar's. And they were not able to resist the force of his conclusion: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

Well did they deserve the name of "hypocrites," who, under pretence of consulting Christ, were all the while bent on tempting Him; who, under pretence of paying honour to God, would have refused to pay tribute to their lawful ruler. And most profitably does our Lord here teach us, that true religion ever promotes, instead of hindering, our dutiful obedience to the laws, and to the magistrates, who, under Providence, administer them. The Christian, therefore, should thus interpret, and apply to his own conduct, this saying of Christ. I am to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. I am to pay all lawful demands, to shew all due respect, to the government, and to the governors of the country in which I live. For myself, I am to be seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly one. I shall abstain therefore from all too anxious care, too busy meddling, in the concerns of that country in which I now abide. Only, as far as my influence extends, I must promote in it the principles of Christian justice and Christian charity. Only I must pray heartily for its welfare, and especially, as the Scriptures very plainly teach, for all in it who are in authority; knowing how much their conduct may affect the happiness of mankind, and remembering that it is God who can alone dispose their hearts, as it seemeth best to his divine wisdom. And if, in any case, such as rarely occurs, the government were to ordain, and require, what is plainly at variance with God's word and will; then must I, at all costs, resolve to render unto God the things that are God's. Caesar must have his own, and no more. He must not interfere with that which is the Lord's. No law of man must induce me to do that which I know to be sin against the Almighty.

But in most cases, the doing of our duty to the king is the doing also of our duty to the King of kings. Thus might we at once render to each what is his own. Thus might we pass through this world to the next without offence to man, or disobedience to our Maker. Thus might we discharge rightly those various duties which concern us as citizens of either country. Here behaving as pilgrims. There looking for our home. Here complying as far as may be, with the wishes of those amongst whom we sojourn; and promoting that social order which protects the peaceable and the diligent, from the sons of violence, idleness, and fraud. But there laying up the treasure we most value. There setting the affection we most deeply feel. And offering to the King, who there ever reigns, the most precious of all tribute, the devotion of the heart.

Hear, Lord of lords, our prayer for them that bear rule in this world; that they may so administer things temporal, as finally to lose not the things eternal; that we may so render unto them their due, as to render thine to Thee; and that by our more Christian service, and by their more Christian rule, the kingdoms of this world may soon become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and He reign for ever and ever. See Rev. 11. 15.

Christ confuteth the Sadducees arguing on the resurrection.

23 'The same day came to him the Sadducees,² which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

24 Saying, Master, ³ Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

33 And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

¹ Mark 12. 18. Luke 20. 27.

² Acts 23. 8.

³ Deut. 25. 5.

⁴ Ex. 3. 6.

§ 82. *Life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel.*

Among the Jews, as among Christians, though there could be but one true religion, there was a variety of sects. And one of the chief things about which they were at variance was the resurrection of the dead, whether they would rise again, or would not. Now it appears, that in the law of Moses, the rewards and punishments set down relate chiefly to this present life. As we read, for instance, in the fifth commandment; Exod. 20. 12; "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." And yet in other parts of their Scriptures, they had very plain intimations that there would be some kind of a future life. And some knowledge of this truth they must have had also delivered down to them from father to son, ever since its first revelation to mankind. So that the Sadducees, however much they might have thought themselves in the right, were certainly in error, and might have known, by due attention, that they were so.

They however were more bent, such is the usual pride of ignorance, on proving themselves to be right in their opinion. And by way of supporting it, they quote to Jesus a passage taken from the law of Moses. See Deut. 25. 5. It was ordained for the Jews, in order to keep up the succession of each family distinct, that if a man should die, and leave a widow without children, his brother should marry her. They suppose therefore a case of seven brothers thus wedded in succession to the same wife; and they then ask, as in triumph, if there were to be a resurrection, "whose wife shall she be of the seven?" Our Lord shews them, notwithstanding, that in this their doctrine they erred, "not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." His power was prepared, for those who rise again to life, a heaven which far exceeds the utmost happiness of this present world; one, in which "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." And next as to the Scriptures, by which are here meant those of the Old Testament; He shews them how they might have found, even in these, very significant hints, that those who die are not altogether dead, but though dead to the world are alive with God. For how else, He argues, could God call Himself "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" and that, long after all three were dead; unless indeed He were likely to name Himself the God of the dead, and not of the living.

Here then does our Lord very signally bring "life and immortality to light." 2 Tim. 1. 10. He shews us how, even in the Old Testament, this doctrine is certainly, if not obviously, contained. He makes it clear, as well as certain, in the Gospel. Here He brings it to light. Here He makes it the great topic of appeal to the hopes and fears of all. Here we read of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that shall never be quenched. See Mark 9. 44. Here, of the "crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. 5. 4. Here, of "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3. 14. The life of man on earth we here learn to reckon but as a moment when compared with eternity; its most important business, when set against the caring for the soul, we now know to be no more than "vanity and vexation of spirit;" Eccles. 2. 26. and its purest and highest pleasures, even those of domestic love, not worthy of a place in the consummation of that bliss, which may so soon be ours in heaven.

Oh let us be not "astonished" only, as were the multitude, at this doctrine; but converted from doubt to faith, from sin to holiness of life. However difficult we may find it to understand the resurrection of the body, and its reunion with the soul, let us be assured that they will certainly take place. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," 1 Cor. 15. 52, "at the last trump," "the dead shall be raised incorruptible." That moment will be to many, to how many we know not, a moment of horror inexpressible. That change may be to us, if it be not our own fault, from weakness to power, from corruption to incorruption, from dishonour to glory. Let us then give God thanks for this his mercy. Let us thank Him with our lives. And especially by temperance and sobriety, by purity and charity, both of thought, and word, and deed, let us strive to keep holy both body and soul, against the day when they may obtain "a better resurrection," Heb. 11. 35, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ answereth the Pharisees, and asketh them about the Messias.

34 ¹ But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36 Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, ² Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second *is* like unto it, ³ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law

and the prophets.

41 ⁴ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David.*

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 ⁵ The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

¹ Mark 12. 28.

² Deut. 6. 5. Luke 10. 27.

³ Lev. 19. 18.

⁴ Mark 12. 35. Luke 20. 41.

⁵ Ps. 110. 1.

§ 83. *That there is no one commandment so great as to do away with the rest.*

“When the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence,” they should have been the more reluctant to renew their temptation of our Lord. But immediately “they were gathered together;” provoked, it seems, by this failure, so much the more to persevere in their wicked undertaking. Thus it is that sin hardens the heart. Thus the disappointments we meet with in the world, if they wear not our affection from its vanities, help often, through our pride and ill tempers, to whet our appetite for its enjoyments. These Pharisees now artfully proposed to Jesus a question much debated among themselves; “Which is the great commandment in the law?” This question, which ever way He answered it, would lead Him, they thought, to offend some one party or another. And they would have been glad also to have his sanction for their false notion, that they might be excused, by obedience to some one such great command, in the neglect or violation of the rest. Jesus, instead of preferring one single commandment, answers by a text from Deuteronomy 6. 5, which contains the spirit of every commandment, the principle on which all must be obeyed. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This,” He adds, “is the first and great commandment.” Not one which will exempt you from attending to the rest, but one which will constrain you to obey all. “And the second is like unto it.” For though they asked not which was the second, He adds, from Levit. 19. 18, another like text, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This was a rule for all their duty to man, as the first was for their duty both to man and God.

After answering their question, He takes occasion, by asking one Himself, to convince them that they understood not their own Scriptures, nor the words of their own king David, relating to the Messiah. That He should be the son of David they were aware. “How then,” he asks further, “doth David in spirit,” that is, speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, “call him Lord?” This they could not account for: because they could not discern between his lowly presence in the flesh, as the son of Mary, and his divine authority as the Son of God, the Lord of David, and of all mankind. Thus they were put to silence, as the Sadducees had been before them. And thus was shewn forth the willingness of God to satisfy in mankind all reasonable inquiries; and his purpose, to silence and to confound all perverse questionings of his word.

Let us then ever inquire, not in order to shew how much we know, but in order that we may learn to know more. Let us learn, in order to practise; in order to love God more, and to serve Him better. And specially let us be warned, by the words we have now been reading, never unduly to exalt any one part of our duty, by way of excusing our neglect of the rest. Vainly would the swearer plead, that he is sober and honest; and therefore hopes to be allowed in his oaths. Vainly would the drunkard protest, that he is kind and forgiving; and therefore trusts that he may safely indulge in excess. Vainly would the covetous, the malicious, the liar, the slanderer, or the extortioner, set up as their great commandment, that they have given to the poor, that they have adopted some exclusive form of doctrine, or obtained from some few vanities of dress, or amusement, or conversation. These things ought they to have done, and not to have left the others undone. See Matt. 23. 23. No one commandment is under the Gospel, any more than under the Law, in such sense the first and great, as that by doing it we may be excused in neglecting any one other. Our duty is no less than that we love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves. If we but once truly feel such love as this, we shall feel it as much of one command as of another. If we once truly love God and our neighbour, we shall be as earnest in our desire to be pure and sober, as to be honest and true; we shall be as ready to forgive, as we are to give; as anxious to think no ill, as we are careful to provoke no wrath; as watchful to give Satan no advantage over our souls, as we are mindful to give the wicked no scandal against our name.

Oh let us thus in all things aim at true Christian love. Let us in all remember how God first loved us, and hence learn both how to love God Himself, and how for his sake, and for Christ's, to love one another!

Christ admonisheth to follow the teaching of the scribes.

1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

4 ¹ For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: ² they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

6 ³ And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and

the chief seats in the synagogues,

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

8 ⁴ But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no *man* your father upon the earth: ⁵ for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 ⁶ And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

¹ Luke 11. 46.

⁴ Jam. 3. 1.

² Numb. 15. 30. Deut. 22. 12.

⁵ Mal. 1. 6.

³ Mark 12. 38. Luke 11. 43.

⁶ Luke 14. 11. & 18. 14.

§ 84. *The rule of Christian precedence.*

The scribes and Pharisees were said by our Saviour to sit in Moses' seat, as having authority among the Jews to teach, and to explain, the law of Moses. That is to say, they were to be respected for their office sake. And this Christ said not to the multitude only, but to his own disciples; bidding them obey the instructions of these teachers, but not to do after their works. "For they say and do not." Christians are in like manner bound to observe and to do, what is taught them out of God's word by their proper pastors, even when these fall far short in their own lives, of what they preach. And who indeed can fail to fall far short, who that preaches the perfect law of the Lord? Who, even the very best, but must be much further short of what he ought to be, than the very worst is short of him? Look not then at man, look not at the earthen vessel; see 2 Cor. 4. 7; but regard, in each minister, the ordinance of God; regard Him who has ordered it thus on purpose, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Cor. 4. 7.

These Jewish teachers gave sad proof of inconsistency, between what they taught, and what they did. They bound heavy burdens, that is, imposed very severe duties on others. Whilst they themselves were not willing so much as "to move them with one of their fingers," that is, so much as to attempt to do any one of them. For, all their works they used to do, as our Lord here adds, "for to be seen of men." Of which conduct He gives several instances. First, they make broad their phylacteries. These were bandages worn on the wrist and forehead, on which they wrote sentences of the Law, as they did also on the borders of their garments. And the larger they made them, the more room they had for writing, and they could thus make the more show with what they wrote. Other instances of what they did, "for to be seen of men," were these. They chose always "the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues;" that is to say, the places of highest honour, either at meals, or at worship. And in like manner they loved "greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi," which means master. These were tokens of respect, which men may indeed give, but which they should not care to receive; which ought, when given, to be received with modesty and reluctance, not exacted with eagerness and pride. And our Lord therefore lays down for his disciples a rule of conduct the very opposite; "Be not ye called Rabbi." We are not to be greedy of such titles as Master; but when we have them, we must bear in mind, that one is our Master, *even* Christ. Nor must we force upon each other such respect as is due to a father; for all we are brethren, and there is one Father which is in heaven, alike theirs, and ours. And thus, if we would be the greatest, we must become the servants of all; labouring continually for their good, and to their inclination submitting readily our own. For "whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased;" the proud shall be brought low. And "whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted;" the lowly shall be raised up.

This is the great law of precedence, the true table of rank, many times repeated in the Gospels. Not that the distinctions of society are to cease, not that the several relations of father and child, master and servant, teacher and disciple, are to be unmarked with due tokens of respect. No; but that none should set their hearts on these, or on any other earthly honours; that we should look in all things rather to the praise of God; and thus, laying to heart our own many sins, which we well know, and hoping of our brethren many good things we know not, we should each esteem others better than ourselves. Thus might "the brother of low degree rejoice," as St. James bids him, "in that he is exalted," James 1. 9, 10, and the rich, and the great also, and wise, of this world, "in that he is brought low;" each glad to think, that they may soon enter into a world, where all, whatever here be their degree, all who are lowly in their own eyes, shall be exalted by the hand of God.

May God incline our hearts to bear one another's burdens! see Gal. 6. 2; not to judge, but to excuse, in others, what we dare not allow in ourselves! to take by preference the lowest place, the hardest work, the poorest recompence! and to make ourselves, each, in all we do, by diligence, and faithfulness in helping one another, not the masters, but the servants of all.

Christ denounceth woe against hypocrites.

13 But ¹woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ²for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

16 Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple,

he is a debtor!

17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is *guilty*.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

¹ Luke 11. 52.

² Mark 12. 40. Luke 20. 47.

|| Or, a debtor, or, bound.

§ 85. *How Christians are in danger of the like hypocrisy.*

Jesus, as his time of suffering drew nigh, rebuked with authority the scribes and Pharisees; and denounced, without regard to their displeasure, the sinfulness of their hypocrisy. He proclaimed against them, as recorded in this chapter, the sentence of woe, on eight different grounds: four of which are now to be explained. First, "for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." This means, that they rejected the truth of Christ; and persecuted all who were willing to receive it. Thus do all they also, in our own times, who wilfully gainsay the truth: all who scoff at others for doing their Christian duty; all who by scorn, coldness, or contradiction, discourage purposely in others, those heights of piety, which they are averse to strive after in themselves. Woe unto them, hypocrites as they also are; pretending to despise that holiness and heaven, which, in truth, they have no hope of reaching.

The second charge runs thus: "for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer." This is a clear case of hypocrisy. Nor is it even amongst ourselves altogether an uncommon one. To wrong the widow and the orphan, to oppress, and to rob of their just dues, those who through the loss of friends, or through poverty, or through any other means, are helpless; these are practices which abound even in a Christian country. Many times too they are disguised by the profession of Christian faith, and by a scrupulous attendance on Christian worship. And yet what other than a vain pretence can long prayers, or any prayers, be counted for by God, when they issue from the lips of one, who in his heart delights in robbery or wrong? who wrongs, and robs, such as can least protect themselves? who wrongs without repentance, and robs without restitution? Woe unto him also! his very prayer is turned into sin! and he will hereafter receive only "the greater damnation!"

Thirdly, "for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." The eagerness of men to make proselytes, and that especially to false opinions, and to faulty practices, arises usually not so much from a regard to their welfare, as from anxiety to be kept in countenance by numbers. This therefore is hypocrisy. And this hypocrisy we commit, whensoever we would persuade others to hold with us, if we do so out of regard to our own credit, rather than to their greater good. To this conduct we are most tempted, whereinssoever we most suspect ourselves to be wrong. Let us be careful then, especially in religious matters, to argue, not for victory, but for truth's sake. Let us convince, if we can, not for our own satisfaction, but for the good of those we converse with. Else we incur the woe here pronounced against making proselytes. Else if we lead our brethren astray, we incur the risk of helping them to fall from step to step into twofold greater error than ourselves.

The fourth charge against these blind guides is, that they say, "Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor." This sort of distinction they made, by way of loosing the bond of an oath altogether. For by such means as these, they could make out any oath to be binding or not, according to their convenience. Thus do many practise, not in oaths only, but in their ordinary speech, to prevaricate. They excuse themselves, by some fine spun distinction, in saying what deceives the hearer. To such belongs this woe for their falsehood, if by any means whatever they wilfully deceive. For in this consists the sin of lying; not in the mere utterance of the lips, but in the heart's intending to mislead, whether by word, or work, or look. Let us watch, that neither in oath nor in common conversation, neither in the matter nor in the manner of what we say or do, we intend any the least deceit. For by no form of falsehood can we escape the sure knowledge of that great God of truth, who is now privy to our inmost thoughts, and will hereafter bring them to judgment.

Christ further denounceth woe against the scribes and Pharisees.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which* is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed

appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

¹ Luke 11. 42.

² Luke 11. 39.

§ 86. *That these woes belong to the like sins in Christians.*

The fifth offence, for which woe was thus fearfully denounced against the scribes and Pharisees, was their affecting so great nicety in the payment of their tithes, whilst they omitted "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Thus we often see men punctual in some one or more formal duties; who neglect, all the while, the weightier matters of the Gospel; the thought of God's love in Christ dying for them, and the devout affection they hence owe to Him. From seeing this, as we cannot help to do, in others, let us learn to suspect it in ourselves. Let us examine, lest we also strain, as it were, at a gnat, and swallow a camel. The duties we most exactly perform are, usually, just such as are most easy to us. Those in which our trial chiefly lies, are such as we are most hindered in, by passion, bad habits, and conformity to an evil world. These then let us examine into; to these direct our chief attention; in these chiefly endeavour to improve; and so escape, if it may be, the threatened woe, by both doing these things, and not leaving the others undone.

Another point, on which these blind guides laid great stress, was the cleansing the vessels in which they took their food. And yet they scrupled not to fill the cup or the platter with the fruit of extortion, or with the viands of excess. Christ bade them cleanse first that which was within the vessels. By which He meant, that the most effectual of all purifying is to fill them with food that is honestly come by, temperately used, and bonitfully shared with those who need. How vain then, and worse than vain, is all outward splendour of our meals, when they are supported by extortion or fraud, when they are swallowed in gluttony or drunkenness! Whilst men admire the unrighteous feast, it is foul and offensive in the sight of God. And by his sure appointment, that plate however clean, that cup however bright, is woe to the soul for ever!

These hypocrites are next compared to whited sepulchres, as being fair outside, and foul within; a condition most hateful to all who are aware of it, that is, to God and to a man's own self. For God, we know, seeth the heart. And of himself a man cannot well help knowing, whether he is, or is not, what he is supposed to be. And most of us must be conscious of many worse things in our own hearts, than appear in our words or works. Thus are we, as far as this is our case, not unlike to the whited sepulchres here spoken of. To proclaim abroad our sins, would indeed but add to our offence, by throwing a scandal in the way of others. And, therefore, to repent of them with confession before God, and with amendment of the heart through his grace, this is the only method to avoid the woful condition of hypocrisy. And so only can we be saved from the misery and sin of appearing outwardly righteous before men, whilst within we are full of iniquity.

The eighth, and last, of these fearful charges against the scribes and Pharisees, for hypocrisy, is this: that they used to repair the tombs of the righteous prophets, whom their fathers had slain, and then take credit to themselves, and say, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But by this very boast they confessed themselves to be the children of those murderers. And by their conduct towards our Lord, they proved that they inherited a full share of that inhuman temper. Let us take heed, when we hear of the guilt of others, that we say not in our hearts, we would not have done the like. But when we read of the sins which are recorded in the Bible, let us, from the view of other men's obduracy, turn rather to consider of our own. Have we never heard in vain the word of God? Have we never neglected the warnings of his prophets? Have we never been near to crucify his blessed Son afresh? We are men of common nature, and like passions with the worst. And were we to be tempted as they have been, how know we but what our fall would be as great?

Christ prophesieth the cruelty of the Jews, and the desolation of Jerusalem.

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city:

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, ¹ from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall

come upon this generation.

37 ² O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, ³ and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would ⁴ I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

¹ Gen. 4. 8.

² Luke 13. 34.

³ 2 Chron. 24. 21.

⁴ 2 Esdras 1. 30.

§ 87. *That we must receive with joy the tidings of salvation through Christ.*

The prophecies here pronounced by Jesus Christ were exactly fulfilled in the conduct of the Jews, and in the signal destruction of Jerusalem. Among the teachers whom He sent unto them, some they slew, as Stephen and James; see Acts 7. 59; 12. 2; some they scourged, as Peter, Paul, and others of the apostles; see Acts 16. 23; 22. 24. Some they persecuted from city to city, as especially Paul and Barnabas. See Acts 14. 5, 6, 19, and 2 Cor. 11. 23—26. These deeds of cruelty proved them to be hardened in sin; to be a generation well deserving that exemplary vengeance, which was to be taken for all righteous blood, in the utter desolation of the people who had shed it. Not that those who aforetime slew the prophets were excused; nor that these others were to be punished for their fathers' sins. Rather this must mean, that as some signal national punishment was to be inflicted, in due season, for the national guilt; so was there no time, and no generation, so fit for its execution, as those of which our Lord here spake. In this therefore his last warning to the Jewish rulers, He reminds them how many times He had endeavoured to reclaim them from their sins; how earnestly He had desired to gather them under his protection, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," and they would not! It was their will to reject his kindness. As it was his to offer, it was theirs to refuse the knowledge of the truth, and of the grace that bringeth salvation. See Titus 2. 11. Thus did they set the will they had received from God, against the will of Him who gave it. And thus did He denounce on them their final desolation; declaring that they should not again see Him, till they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." That is, till such time as they should have been so chastened by affliction, as to receive Him with the devotion which they now refused.

In these dealings of the Almighty with the Jews, we are instructed as to the method in which He has thought fit to try the will of all mankind. He sends prophets, and wise men, and scribes. He enlightens all in different degrees, either with the faint remnant of tradition, by which the heathen are informed that there is a God; or by the full light of revelation, as it shines in a Christian land. All then have some means of knowing God, and knowing somewhat of his will, and reckoning on some kind of judgment hereafter. According to the use of the means each enjoys, must each expect his future sentence to be pronounced. On the Jews it depended whether they would or would not, on us also ourselves whether we will or will not, be gathered together unto the fold of Christ. Nothing stands between heaven and the worst of sinners, but their own wilfulness. And nothing can more aggravate their sin than to have persecuted and slain the witnesses of the truth, to have opposed them, and rejected their friendly counsel. The desolation of the Jews' city, and their dispersion at this very day amongst all nations, these are fearful warnings of the certainty and severity of divine retribution.

Let us then choose of our ourselves the better part; and pray God to give us grace that we may choose effectually, and joyfully receive the glad tidings of salvation. Let us not wait to be chastened with affliction. But let us say, whilst we have time, and health, and strength, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Daily does He now endeavour to gather us, as his children, together; to save us from all evil, to confirm and strengthen us in all good. Let it not be true of us that we would not. Let not us reject his inspired teachers, by neglecting the doctrines, or the duties they have recorded in the Scriptures for our direction. In these words He thus invites us to take shelter under the wings of his redeeming love. James 4. 8, 9. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." And again, ver. 10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Thus it is that He offers to save us; not by works of righteousness of our own, but through faith in his most precious blood. Let us then believe, believe in Him, that He is mighty to save. Sensible of our own utter unworthiness, let us cast on Him all our care: lay before Him all our burden; and seek from Him all our strength. Sensible of his great mercy in thus saving us, let us conform our will to his; give Him our whole heart; give up to his service our whole life; and say joyfully, even when death shall come, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Christ prophesieth the destruction of the temple.

1 And ¹ Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, ² There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall* be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, ³ Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

9 ⁴ Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

¹ Mark 13. 1. Luke 21. 5.

² Luke 19. 44.

³ Ch. 10. 17. Luke 21. 12. John 16. 2.

§ 88. *That we have encouragement to endure unto the end.*

It is known from history that the temple of Jerusalem was built of remarkably large stones. And this made it the more improbable that it should be ever utterly thrown down. And the more this was improbable beforehand, the more certain we may be, that none but God could foresee how soon there should be not one stone left upon another. Which thing took place within the life of man from the time these words were uttered. The disciples, astonished at the prophecy, ask next of Jesus, "When shall these things be?" They had many times heard Him speak of his coming again. They trusted that He would then fulfil their views of worldly glory. And they ask therefore, without well knowing of what they spake, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

The answer here given applies to both parts of this question; both to our Lord's first coming to punish the Jews, and to his second coming to judge all mankind at the end of the world. For the dealings of God with that single nation are meant throughout for a lesson to the rest of mankind. And the signs of the destruction of their city and temple are, in this prophecy, in such manner set down, as that by their fulfilment we should be warned of the approaching destruction of the world.

Thus the disciples were told, that before Jerusalem was destroyed, there would be wars, and rumours of wars, and famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. This we know from history did in fact take place, about the time here signified. Nor is it less certain that Christians in that early season were hated of all nations, persecuted, and put to death for the sake of the name of Christ. Many also were offended, that is, induced to fall from the truth. Many betrayed also one another; were led astray by false prophets: and had their love made cold by the iniquity of the world. These things we know took place, while the Gospel was being preached to all nations; between the time when these words were spoken, and the time when Jerusalem was destroyed. Nor let us doubt that they have again taken place, are taking place, and will take place, over the whole world, in these last times; as signs of the second coming of Christ to judgment. Let us see too, when they do take place, that our hearts be not troubled. Let us be at peace with ourselves, because at peace with God, in the midst of tumults, confusion, and distress. Let us be fearless of affliction, because willing to be afflicted, for Christ's sake; fearless of death, because willing, for his sake, to die. And notwithstanding the iniquity that abounds, let us continue not only patient in well doing, but persevering also in love, and in the work of love to all around us, for the sake of our blessed Lord, until the end.

How near may be the end for which we look, it was not his purpose here to reveal. Only He has set forth such signs of its approach as might put all generations on the watch for its arrival. In our own times these signs do more than ever demand our attention. Never have there been made such active exertions for preaching "in all the world," as "a witness unto all nations," "the gospel of the kingdom" of Christ. Never has iniquity more abounded. Never have there been more grievous instances of the love of many waxing cold. We see enough then, in the present state of things, to excite us to persevere unto the end; enough to encourage us, in the cheerful hope, that this end is not far off. For that coming of Christ let us daily watch, as though it were close at hand. And yet wait also for it, patiently; however long it may be delayed. God will in his good time fulfil his word of truth. And, surely as we have now wars, and pestilence, false prophets, and abundance of iniquity; so surely will there be an end, an end of evil; and he that shall endure unto it, in faith, and love, "the same shall be saved."

Christ warneth his disciples when to flee from Jerusalem.

15 ¹ When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by ² Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand :) should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

16 Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: 23 ³ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 ⁴ For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

¹ Mark 13. 14.

² Dan. 9. 37.

³ Mark 13. 21. Luke 17. 23.

⁴ Luke 17. 37.

§ 89. *That we should flee from sin to escape the wrath to come.*

In what our Lord here says of the destruction of Jerusalem, He points plainly to his last coming to judge the world. First, He bids his disciples be sure to fly out of the city, as soon as they should see in the holy place, or near to the temple and the mount on which it stood, the abomination of desolation, which here means the Roman army. For by that army was the city made desolate. And the Romans were the people of whom Daniel had long before prophesied, that their empire, succeeding three others, should "devour the whole earth," and "tread it down, and break it in pieces." Dan. 7. 23. Under the power of this nation the Jews were now reduced; but they were ready at any time to rebel, out of confidence in the great strength of their city. The first counsel therefore here given to the disciples is to flee into the mountains. They were to tarry for no business however urgent. They were to pray against all natural hindrances of rapid flight. They were to pray that their flight might not befall them in the winter, when they could less easily put up with its hardships; nor on the sabbath day, when, by journeying, they would break its appointed rest, and lose the spiritual consolation which the ordinance is designed ever to afford.

And further to urge their flight, they are informed that such tribulation should then take place in the devoted city, as never had yet been "since the beginning of the world." In agreement with which prophecy, the historian of the Jews has thus described the sufferings of his countrymen: "If the misfortunes of all from the beginning of the world were compared with those of the Jews, they would appear to be much inferior." (Josephus.) "But for the elect's sake," adds our Lord, "those days shall be shortened." That is, for the sake of the devout Christians, as well those who remained in the city, as those who were suffering by their sojourn in the mountains; for the sake also of that remnant of the Jews, of whom many will hereafter become Christians. And this is a mercy which will help also, we hope, to mitigate the like sufferings that are to come upon the earth, before the great and terrible day of the Lord. He, who for ten righteous' sake would have spared a whole city, see Gen. 18. 32, does, many times, when we little think it, make short the chastisements of the world, and especially will do so ere his last coming, for the sake of the faithful who dwell therein. How then should it add life to our faith, and fervour to our devotion, to think that for our sakes, if faithful and devout, "those days shall be shortened!"

In the second place, our Lord here bids his disciples not to believe any false rumours of Christ being come, such as were common in Jerusalem at the time of the siege. Like to these are the accounts we hear amongst ourselves, of pretenders to prophecy or miracles, and of persons who set up to be the messengers of Messiah. More, probably, and more plausible instances of imposture and self-deceit, will make their appearance before the end be fully come. But to none of these must we listen; to no vain questionable rumour that "here is Christ." His coming will be sudden and manifest, as the lightning which by a single flash is seen, from one end of heaven to the other. And with Him will be assembled the heavenly host, in speed and power like to eagles; gathering round the earth, which, as an useless carcase, shall then perish "in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Rev. 14. 10.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons," as St. Peter asks, 2 Pet. 3. 11, "ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Ought we to be fond of a world thus sure to perish, or "looking for and hasting unto," as this apostle tells us, "the coming of the day of God?" What we ought to be, we can scarce fail to know; so far at least as to know that we are what we ought not. Let us lay to heart, as a strong motive for our practice, this sure coming of Christ to judgment. Let us flee from the wicked practices of the world, as from a city devoted to desolation. And whenever we are pressed by the temptation that doth most easily beset us, let us think how all loathsome sin will seem, when our Lord shall shine forth like the lightning in the heavens, suddenly, fearfully, gloriously.

Christ prophesieth of his coming to judge the world.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken :

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven ; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree ; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh :

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

¹ Mark 13. 24. Luke 21. 25. Is. 13. 10. Joel 2. 31. Ezek. 32. 7.
² Or, with a trumpet and a great voice.

³ Mark 13. 31.

⁴ Rev. 1. 7.

⁵ Gen. 7. 5. Luke 17. 26.

⁶ 1 Cor. 15. 52. 1 Thess. 4. 16.

⁷ Luke 17. 36.

§ 90. *That the last judgment is sure, and will be soon, and sudden.*

This prophecy, as it draws towards a close, points almost entirely to that coming of Christ at the end of the world, in which we are all most deeply concerned. Of that awful advent we cannot possibly know more than what God has been pleased in his word to reveal. Nor has He told us these particulars by way of satisfying our vain curiosity ; but in order to raise in us a wholesome fear, and continual watchfulness. The sun shall “ be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.” These, and other like circumstances here mentioned, shew that the frame of nature will be utterly dissolved by a sudden and visible convulsion ; so that what now we see, and hear, and feel, we shall feel and hear and see no more. “ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” Some signal manifestation of his presence shall be displayed to all mankind ; some such glory will fill all earth and heaven, as shone in a small space around St. Paul, see Acts 9. 3, at the time of his conversion. “ And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” They shall mourn for sin, and out of fear of punishment. “ And they shall see the Son of man coming.” “ Every eye,” as St. John writes in the Revelation, Rev. 1. 7, “ every eye shall see him ; and they also which pierced him.” Then shall we need no exhortation to mourn, when we behold his sign, when we see Himself. But we shall own ourselves, even those who least seem to sin, we shall own ourselves with shame and confusion of face to have been guilty of piercing Christ. “ And he shall send his angels,” the spirits who minister to his will. “ And they shall gather together his elect,” all from every quarter of the world, who through grace believe heartily, love sincerely, and diligently obey.

And now observe how the certainty of this coming of Christ is pressed on our attention. As by the putting forth of fresh-leaves in a tree we know that summer is nigh, so by the first part of this prophecy being fulfilled, we may tell that the rest will surely follow. Surely then as Jerusalem was made desolate, surely as the people of the Jews have, ever since its desolation, been scattered throughout the earth, so surely “ the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Pet. 3. 10. And not surely only, but speedily, as God counts speed. For, “ this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” This generation, that is, this race of human kind. Short-lived as man is, and short as must needs be the permitted existence of all his sinful family, yet shall they not altogether be cut off, before all these signs have been fulfilled. Cut off they shall all be at last, and with them the very heavens and the earth, in which, and under which, they abide. However sure we deem this universe we inhabit, these surrounding objects of sense ; the word of Christ is still more sure, that word which has pronounced of heaven and earth, that they “ shall pass away.”

“ But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” That is to say, God hath not revealed to any one, at what time Christ will come to judgment. So that men will be as they were in the days of Noah, occupied in the common business and enjoyments of life. How much the more therefore should we labour and pray, that we may be in these things always influenced by Christian grace ; that in our business we may be not slothful, but “ fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord,” Rom. 12. 11 ; that in our enjoyments we may be sober, heavenly minded, rejoicing “ in the Lord alway.” Phil. 4. 4. And whereas we are here further told that out of two in the same field, or at the same mill, “ the one shall be taken and the other left,” this is to shew us, that God will in that day be no respecter of persons ; but that, in every condition and occupation of life, some will be saved and some be lost. Let us then in no case complain of our own lot. Whatever may be its inconvenience, however difficult or painful may be our portion for a time ; it is as likely as the most agreeable we could devise, to prove, through God’s good gift, our road to heaven, our way to enter into eternal life.

The good man of the house and the servants.

42 ¹ Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 ² But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

45 ³ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

¹ Mark 13. 35.

² Luke 12. 39. 1 Thess. 5. 2. Rev. 16. 15.

³ Luke 12. 42.

|| Or, cut him off.

§ 91. *That we should be ever on the watch for death and judgment.*

“Watch therefore” is the great practical lesson with which our Lord concludes the prophecy of his coming to judgment. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” The duty is difficult. But the reason is plain. If we know not when He is to come, how but by continual watchfulness can we be ready for Him? If indeed we could know the exact time, and could be sure also of preparing just beforehand, it might be soon enough to prepare as the time approached. And so also if the good man of the house, in this parable, had known in what watch, that is, at what time of night, the thief would come, he would have watched, that is, would have taken care to be awake, would have been on his guard at that time. But as he did not know, his house was broken into; for he neglected, as it seems, the only safe way left for him, to watch, or be on his guard, all night.

This then is the kind of watching our Lord urges upon us. “Therefore be ye also ready.” Ready, not merely at one particular time, but ready at all times. “For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Not only we do not know when He will come; but He cometh, at an hour when we think He will not. When men most reckon on this world’s enduring, then shall it on a sudden cease to exist. When we, for ourselves, most count on youth, or health, or strength, then shall we be overtaken, and if we watch not, be overtaken unprepared, by death and judgment. If therefore, merely by being on his guard, the master of the house might have preserved his property from thieves, much more let us be ever on the watch for Him, who cometh, in such an hour as we think not, either to give us the riches of his mercy, or to cut us off from their enjoyment for ever.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?” To all of us hath God given some charge. All hath He made stewards of some gift, which we are to exercise according to his own commands. Which then of us is a faithful and wise servant, wise because faithful, and faithful so as to obey his will? “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” That is to say, when He thus cometh unawares. For no servant, whether good or evil, would fail to put all things right, if he knew just when his master would return. And it is because this coming of Christ is uncertain, therefore it is that we are tempted to say in our hearts, “My lord delayeth his coming.” Hence it is that men are emboldened to continue in sin. Hence they begin to smite their fellowservants, that is, to be oppressive, or cruel, or cross, to each other. Hence they eat and drink with the drunken; that is, they eat more than they want, or drink more than they ought; they consume unthankfully on their lusts what they should use with temperance, or should save for the sake of those who need. And still they say to themselves, I may sin this once more, and yet have time to repent. I may persist in anger, pride, or covetousness, in waste, idleness, or sensuality; all this I may yet a little longer indulge in, for “my Lord delayeth his coming.” But what, if whilst thus we reason, our Lord should, as here He warns us, come in a day when we look not for Him? What if some sudden disease or accident cut off in a few hours the presumptuous sinner? What if in a more protracted illness, he have no ease of body, no rest for thought, or for repentance? What if old age, as it creeps slowly on, should encourage, by continuance of health, the same evil thought of the heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming?” And observe, it is especially in such cases as these, it is “but and if” the evil servant say this very thing in his heart, it is to him who thus presumes, and it is because he thus presumes, “the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder.” Presume not therefore on delay; for the more you so presume, the more are you likely to be taken unawares. Presume not on delay; but watch. Act, each hour, as if you were indeed watching. Give to every one their “meat in due season.” Whether it be service, or counsel, or help, or forgiveness, or kind words, or charitable thoughts; give to each, do to each, as your Lord has bidden you; and as you would wish to have been doing, this very hour, if in the next He were to summon you, by death to judgment.

The parable of the ten virgins.

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

3 They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are *gone out*.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so* ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 ¹ Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

|| Or, *going out*.

¹ Ch. 24. 42. Mark 13. 33.

§ 92. *How we may have oil in our lamps.*

The duty of watchfulness so urgently recommended at the close of the last chapter, is here further enforced by a parable. Virgins are mentioned, because their attendance was customary at marriage feasts ; and also because our Lord would warn us that this very state of life, however highly in some respects commended, is liable, like all others, to its share of folly as well as of wisdom, of neglect as well as of watchfulness. "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Not that this must be taken for the proportion in the world, or in the visible church, of those who watch for Christ, and those who watch not. Not that we must ever forget that broad is the way that leadeth unto death ; and that narrow is the way of life, "and few there be that find it." Matt. 7. 13, 14. The wisdom of the wise virgins was shewn in taking oil in their vessels with their lamps, that is, in having forethought for the future, in providing "while it is called To-day," Heb. 3. 13, against the night "when no man can work." John 9. 4. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." This did the wise as well as the foolish ; signifying, both how liable the most watchful are to be overtaken for a while by forgetfulness of God, and how sure also are all to sleep, when this life ends, the appointed sleep of death. This then is the season for providing oil for our lamps, if we would then have them bright ; if, when we shall arise from the dead, we would be prepared to meet the bridegroom. For if in death we sleep, how deep is that sleep ! how short will it appear, how but for a moment, the twinkling of an eye ! How in an instant will the judgment seem close after death ! How soon, if life be here uncertain, how suddenly may we reckon to hear the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

What an useless thing is a lamp without oil ! What a wretched object is a soul without grace ! What a miserable creature is that man, who, when this life ends, and the next begins, has no faith in God's mercy through Christ, no sense of his love, no experience of his strength made perfect in weakness. See 2 Cor. 12. 9. What will be then, what is now, the use of asking from each other that oil, whereof no one can ever have enough for himself ? In vain should we go to those who make pretence of selling, what no price can purchase, save the blood of Christ. The saving of the soul is his work, and his gift. It is given through faith to them who love Him. The grace to believe, and love, and serve, we must ask, not of each other, but of the heavenly Bridegroom. And here we are well warned, that an hour is at hand, when no prayer can be heard, no exertion aided, no application, however urgent, receive other than this answer, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Would we then escape that fearful sentence ? Would we be not shut out from that marriage of divine love, wherein Christ is united to his church, and man made one with his Maker ? Let us now take the utmost pains to make our calling and election sure. See 2 Pet. 1. 10. Let us learn from God's word, the true tenour of his will, the way He hath ordained for eternal life, the oil which will abide and give light hereafter, when "the bridegroom cometh." Not that it is which others can supply ; as some have vainly taught, that one man's good works can be imputed to his neighbour. Nor is it what can in any way be bought with money, as the same corrupt church has made many to believe. No, we are to take oil in our own lamps, ourselves. And yet not we, but God that giveth all things for our good, He it is who maketh our light to shine. To Him then let us apply, through Christ, to Him apply with prayer, for grace unto holiness, for faith unto salvation. These blessings we must ask of God, as his to give ; we must thank Him for, as his, when given. We must provide them with diligence, improve them with zeal, and especially secure them by watchfulness. And thus whilst here we wait for Christ, our sleep shall be not sloth but heavenly peace. And at whatsoever hour our Lord may come, we shall go in with Him unto the marriage, and our joy shall be full.

The first part of the parable of the talents.

14 ¹ For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And^u unto one he gave five || talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.

17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou good and faithful servant*: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

¹ Luke 19. 12.

|| A talent is 187l. 10s. Ch. 18. 24.

§ 93. *That our improvement must bear proportion to grace received.*

The parable, of which a portion has now been read, represents to us the kingdom of heaven as it will be settled at the coming of Christ to judgment. The great lessons we may hence derive are these following:

First, that, as the lord of these servants came certainly at the last, though not till “after a long time:” so the judgment of Christ, however distant it may seem, will one day be most surely present. And therefore it is represented as at hand to all succeeding generations; the time between being short as far as mankind are concerned; see 1 Cor. 7. 29; and being as nothing in respect of God, with whom one day is “as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” 2 Pet. 3. 8. Never then let us listen to, much less ask in our own hearts, the question familiar with the scoffer, “Where is the promise of his coming?” 2 Pet. 3. 4. Though it may seem to us “after a long time,” though it may in Scripture be said to be so, out of condescension to our weak thoughts, yet are we no less plainly told, that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3. 9. The servants have time to improve their talents. They have time to do right. They have time to repent of what they do wrong. They have time to serve the Lord with diligence. But they have no time to lose in sloth or negligence. They have time to work. But they have no time to waste. They have time to believe and to obey. But they have no time to sin.

Secondly, we learn that God dispenses gifts and trials “to every man according to his several ability.” He, and He only can be aware, which of us may best be instructed with health or wealth, long life or excellent capacity; and which may be better tried in affliction, in sickness, in ignorance, or in want. He bestows, according to his wisdom and goodness, the means and opportunities, the station, abilities, and requirements, which distinguish one man's portion from another's. Let each of us be content with what we have; not doubting, in any single instance, that it is in mercy allotted to our share. And instead of fancying we could do better with some other talent, let us diligently improve what God hath placed in our charge.

Thirdly, we should be hence made aware that we are to receive our sentence, not according to the amount of excellency actually attained, but according to our use of the talents given to us, whether many or few, whether great or small. To have been diligent in the improvement of what we have, though little; to have been faithful over “a few things,” will ensure, no less than to have been faithful over many things, will ensure that praise above all price, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Never then let us judge favourably of ourselves, merely because we know others whose ~~down~~ward conduct is worse than our own, and whose case may therefore seem to be more desperate. Though we could count their talents, which is beyond our power, yet still less can we count their diligence or sloth; we know not, and have no means of knowing, whether they have, or have not, laboured more than ourselves, to resist temptation, or to advance in holiness. Let us consider instead each thus in his own case: How much have I received myself? What instruction from parents or teachers, what opportunities of knowing and serving God, what divine assistance have I experienced? What longsuffering and forbearance have I met with from that Holy Spirit, who will not “always strive with man?” Gen. 6. 3. These things if we well weigh, we shall find too much to condemn in ourselves, for us to think ever of finding fault with our neighbours. We shall become convinced of sin, and that deeply, though we have received only a single talent, if we find that we have been hiding it in the earth, not improving it to the glory of God.

The parable of the talents concluded.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

¹ Ch. 13. 12. Mark 4. 25. Luke 8. 18.

§ 94. *That to be slothful is to be wicked.*

In this latter part of the parable of the talents, we see plainly, that the more a man excuses himself in sin, the more does he stand condemned before God. "He that had received the one talent" first pleaded that he knew his master to be a hard man, then, that he was afraid, and in the third place, that he had got and could restore what had been given him. "Lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine." Many, it is to be feared, cherish, by way of palliating their sins, some such hard thoughts of God as these. I have no strength, they say within themselves, to resist temptation; I have no heart to continue patient in well doing; my burden, the burden of the flesh with its lusts, the burden of the world with its vanities, the burden of Satan with his wiles, my burden is greater than I can bear. God cannot surely, they presumptuously conclude, cannot consistently with his goodness, require an obedience which is thus impossible. Let such self deceivers lay to heart this answer: "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not;" according to your own thoughts of God this obedience is required: "thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers." The more you reckon to have exacted of you, the more ought you in common prudence to exert yourselves, to make the most of the means you have; the more if you neglect to do so, the more are you in your neglect inexcusable.

The second plea of the slothful servant is fear: "I was afraid." There is a fear which is salutary, which leads to love, and constrains us to obey. There is a fear which is servile, slothful, near akin to hatred and despair. Than this latter there is no case more perilous, no passion more to be subdued, no temper more repugnant to Christian meekness and Christian grace. Never let us plead fear in neglect of duty. Never let us so fear as to disobey. Never let us so fear as to do that which is mean, or to leave undone that which is right. Never let us fear to speak the truth. Never let us fear to defend or to help our neighbour. Never let us fear to resist the devil, or to renounce the world. Never let us fear to encounter harm, where God requires, for the sake of what He deems good.

Thirdly, let us never dare to say, let us never dare to think in respect of God, "Lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine." What have we that He has not given us? And what is there, of all that He hath given, that we have not deformed or defiled? In his own image made He us. And we by sin have lost it! Health He giveth us; and we injure it by carelessness, or excess! Time; and we waste it! Grace; and we resist it! The Comforter He sendeth: and we grieve Him! His Son He sent to die for us on the cross. And by our sins we crucify Him afresh!

And here, fourthly, observe, that to abstain from gross evil, nay, from all evil whatsoever, is far from enough service, nay, is counted for no service at all. To be no worse than when we came into the world, to have done no great violence, or wrong, or scandal, to be innocent of drunkenness, or dishonesty, of murder or adultery, tempts many perhaps to say, "There thou hast *that is* thine." But if meantime we have been hiding our talent in the earth, if we have made no progress in holiness and love, this excuse will only expose us to the severe rebuke, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." In our Christian calling, to be slothful is to be wicked. To have improved in nothing is the way to have taken from us that which we have. If nothing we have profited ourselves, nothing of what God hath given will be set down in our favour. But "unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance;" here abundance of God's grace, hereafter of God's glory. Here shall the good gifts of the Spirit be more and more largely, each day, shed abroad in the hearts of those who most profit by them. Hereafter shall be theirs the more exalted praise, the mansions of bliss more high, and a share the more abundant in the joy of their Lord.

Make us, blessed Lord, contented with the talent Thou hast given us, with the state of life and light to which thou hast been pleased to call us! Help us to be faithful over what things we have; not to despise those who have fewer, nor to envy those who have more; but to stir up, and improve to the uttermost, the gift that is in ourselves!

Christ declareth who shall be blessed of the Father.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory :

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats :

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :

35 ¹ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger,

and ye took me in :

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

¹ Isaiah 58. 7. Ezek. 18. 7.

§ 95. *That we should do all things as doing them unto Christ.*

Our Lord, in what goes before, has described the manner of his coming to judge the world. He has declared in one parable, by way of motive to our watchfulness, how surely He will take us unawares. By another He has explained the equitable rule on which his judgment will proceed. He now urges, in conclusion of the whole, a consideration most important in the practice of our lives, that our conduct will in every thing be estimated by a reference of our motives to Himself. The duty He would here enjoin is exactly what the apostle, writing afterwards to the Colossians, 3. 17, thus plainly expressed; "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." And, that He may engage us the more warmly in this view of our duty, Christ applies it in this instance to a matter of universal interest, the relief of each other's wants. And thus at the same time He recommends in the most lively manner, that charity, which, in its extended sense, is the chief new commandment of the Gospel. See John 13. 34.

How fearful is the separation here described us to take place "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him!" How alarming the thought, that different as is the right hand from the left, distant as are heaven and hell, so distant, so different from each other, are the places to one of which we shall be severally consigned. Here indeed grow together the tares and the wheat. Here they who oppress, and they who relieve, they who hate, and they who love, they who set at nought the love of Christ, and they who in all things remember Him, all these are in this world mingled together, the evil and the good. But on that day we shall be separated. And God only knows on which side we shall each be placed. We shall be separated "one from another." "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Great will be the surprise, as well as the joy, of those humble Christians, who will then be exalted to glory. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" They count not that they have done aught of acceptable service. They are conscious that in many things they have done wrong, in many things failed to do right. And especially in the ministering to the necessities of others, they are aware that they have too little thought of doing it unto Christ. Yet doth He of his mercy pronounce, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He accepts the imperfect service, and by the praise He gives it, points out to us the perfection He would have us aim at. He counts done unto Himself what is done unto the poor; that He may teach us, in all we do of good, to them and to all, to do it unto Him.

Here then we have the most urgent of motives, the most excellent of rules, not only for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, but for every part of Christian kindness, for every particular of social duty. Are we called upon to give? It is Christ who begs of us. Have we occasion to forbear, or to forgive? It is unto Him that we must exercise these good tempers. Are we required to labour? let us labour unto the Lord. To suffer? let us suffer as with Christ. To love? let our good will extend, like his, towards all mankind, and be directed, for his sake, to their eternal welfare. See what a feeling He vouchsafes to own for our infirmities! See how He hungers with them that hunger, and thirsts with them that thirst! See how He counts Himself to be naked, and sick, and in prison, for every one who thus suffers, out of those whom He calls his brethren! Let us learn from his example to "weep with them that weep." Rom. 12. 15. Let us in these affections of our brethren, feel as for ourselves. Not as for ourselves only, let us feel, but as for Christ. For thus hath He in our behalf not felt only, but lived, and laid down also his life on the cross. And thus may we for his sake, if thus we love and help each other, be counted among the righteous, and inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.

Christ declareth who shall be hereafter cursed.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord,

when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

¹ Psalm 6. 8. Ch. 7. 23.

² Dan. 12. 2. John 5. 29.

§ 96. *That we should love each other for Christ's sake and for our own.*

The righteous were above described as unconscious of the service Christ reckons them to have done unto Himself. This arises from their humility. The wicked too are not aware that they had refused Christ their services. This comes of their ignorance and pride. To do good, and to think nothing of it, is the way to enter into the joy of our Lord. To refuse to do good, or to do evil, and think nothing of it, to sin, and not know ourselves to be sinners, this would fit us to be placed by the King on the left hand, and to hear his words of wrath, "Depart from me, ye cursed." He saith not here, as He said to the righteous, "ye blessed of my Father," He saith not here, ye cursed of my Father. For though the blessing of the righteous be of God, the curse of the wicked is of themselves. The righteous are counted to be so through faith, and for the sake of the blood of Christ. Whilst they on the left hand are placed there for their own work's and wickedness' sake.

And now observe what works of wickedness are here mentioned. Are they only what we reckon gross sins that are shewn to expose men to "everlasting punishment?" Far from it. They are what many men, who are respected by the world, are committing all their lives long! They are such as giving no meat to the hungry, and no drink to them that are athirst; entertaining no strangers, clothing not them that are naked, and not visiting the prisoners, or the sick. These are duties which many commonly neglect, as being irksome, and not necessary to ensure the good esteem of their neighbours. So they can but pass for honest and true, goodnatured and honourable, they care not to be bountiful, to labour in well doing, they care not to give up, for Christ's sake, their time and thoughts, to alleviating the sufferings of mankind. And all the while they are not aware that it is Christ's work, and Christ's Self, that they are neglecting. They answer to his charge, as if no harm were done; "When saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" They have yet to learn this rule of Gospel judgment; "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." If then we, being Christians, refuse any good that our hand findeth to do, it is Christ whom we are counted to refuse. If we wilfully refuse to do good, we may reckon on receiving the same sentence of wrath, with those who wilfully do evil. If the misery which is in the world through sin, raise in us no anxious concern, how slight must be our love for Christ, whose most precious blood it cost! If we endeavour not according to our ability to relieve each other's bodily wants, if we aim not to feed also with spiritual knowledge the hungry soul, to set free them that are bound of Satan, and to visit with healing counsel the sick in trespasses and sins; how lightly must we esteem the example of Him, who "went about doing good," Acts 10. 38, and who has left it us for his new commandment, that we should love one another! See John 13. 34. And forcibly does our Lord enjoin that we should do so out of love to Him. And for this end we have abundantly set forth in the Gospel the riches of his mercy and grace. "Greater love," it is said, "hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15. 13. This love had Christ for us. Love like to this we ought to feel for Him, and to feel, for his sake, towards each other. But if we hesitate, He would move us unto faith and holiness, by what few are found deficient in, the love of ourselves. "These," saith He, speaking of those who love not, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Have we then any desire of heaven? Have we any fear of hell? Do we dread the "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels?" Would we wish to inherit the "kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world?" One way only there is thereto; and that is, to be righteous. One means only to be righteous; and that is, to believe. One way only to believe, and that is, so as to love; to love, because Christ first loved us, and gave Himself for us unto death. This is to be righteous through faith in Christ. This is to have that faith which is not dead, but living. And they only who so believe, so love, and live unto Christ, shall go away into life eternal.

God quicken in us daily that faith which both "worketh by love," Gal. 5. 6, and which hath "respect also unto the recompense of the reward!" Heb. 11. 26. God make us daily mindful, as we work, that when we have done all, "we are unprofitable servants!" Luke 17. 10. God teach us that our reward, if reward we shall obtain, is not ours, but his who saith, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be!" Rev. 22. 12.

The rulers conspire against Christ. A woman anointeth his head.

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

2 'Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the passover*, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

3 'Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

6 'Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured

it on his head, as he sat at meat.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them. Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 'For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

¹ Mark 14. 1. Luke 22. 1. John 13. 1.

² John 11. 47.

³ Mark 14. 3. John 11. 1.

⁴ Deut. 15. 11.

§ 97. *That we cannot spend too much in the honouring of Christ.*

"When Jesus had finished all these sayings," that is, his account of the day of judgment, He next reminded his disciples that the passover was near at hand, and told them of Himself that He was betrayed to be crucified. He was, as St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. 5. 7, "our Passover;" He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13. 8. And when the day of our visitation shall arrive, it is only through his blood that we may escape the wrath to come. However highly the preceding discourse may set the importance of good works, this mention following of Christ's death on the cross reminds us, that no charity of ours, no diligence in the improvement of our talents, no watchfulness, however anxious, will avail, except through the atonement of his blood.

Whilst our Lord was foreshewing his death to the disciples, his enemies, at the palace of the high priest, were consulting how best to compass it. This they chose to do, not by force, but by subtilty. And in like manner, for fear of the people, they settled not to do it during the feast. Yet on the very day they meant not, was Jesus, through their means, led forth to die; on the very day when the paschal lamb was slain. So vain is it for man to purpose, where God has ordered otherwise for good, so vain for man to purpose evil. Only in their subtilty they were allowed to prosper. For what they had in hand was Satan's work; and he is, as our Lord describes him, "a liar, and the father of it." John 8. 44. Let us remember then that our enemy desires to take us by subtilty. Let us know, that we have the most need to fear when least we see sign of danger. Let us not only watch against presumptuous sins, but search out also, if possible, our most secret faults, lest these and their iniquity should be our ruin. See Psalm 19. 12, 13.

The plot is laid. The victim is aware of his approaching end. And now, whilst yet He lives, He is anointed ready for his burial. "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat." How lively was her faith in Christ, in Christ apprehended as dead! How great her zeal to count all things, all things to her most precious, but loss for his sake! "It might have been sold for much." Much therefore was its cost to her who gave it. And the disciples who understood not her intent, and Judas, who "was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein," John 12. 6; these, "when they saw it, had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." Our Lord bids them not trouble the woman, and tells them it was a good work that she had wrought. He then adds, "Ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always." That is to say, He was soon to be taken away "out of their sight," Acts 1. 9, and the poor would remain among Christians, to be objects of bounty to the rest, as long as the world should last. "For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body she did it for my burial." Aware of the malice of my enemies, and expecting that they will put me to death, she hath done a work which is most seasonable for my burial, so soon to take place. Therefore, instead of blame, let her receive abundant praise. "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Signally is this prophecy at this moment fulfilled. And plainly should this signify to us, that whatsoever we can spend for the honouring of Christ will be sure to redound to our endless praise. The thoughtless may count it waste. The covetous may grudge the bounty which they may not share, and will not practise. But though it were our whole substance that we have to offer to our Lord, the instance of this woman may suffice to convince us, that we shall in no wise lose our reward.

Christ eateth the passover with his disciples.

14 'Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

17 'Now the first *day* of the *feast* of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed

them; and they made ready the passover.

20 'Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve,

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

23 And he answered and said, 'He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

¹ Mark 14. 10. Luke 22. 3.

² Mark 14. 12. Luke 22. 7.

³ Mark 14. 18. Luke 22. 14. John 13. 21.

⁴ Ps. 41. 9.

§ 98. *That in the worst of sins, we should distrust ourselves.*

It is set down of the traitor that he was "one of the twelve;" as if the apostles were not on this account careful to conceal what might seem to be a disgrace to themselves. So faithfully did they in all instances record the whole history they had to relate. So ready should we be in relating any thing to tell, on due occasions, however injurious to ourselves, the whole truth, as well as nothing but the truth. Judas, it seems, was not enticed to this act by the chief priests; but of his own accord he offered to deliver up to them his Master. And we may remark, that he did this soon after he had been rebuked of Jesus for finding fault with the woman about the ointment. His covetous disposition was thus whetted by what he took for an affront. And what he had probably been long meditating for gain, he resolved at once to put in practice for revenge. If then you have been tempted to entertain either the love of riches, or the desire of vengeance, remember that these were the sins of Judas; these led him, as they will lead you, if you forsake them not, to betray your Saviour Christ. We should observe, too, at what price our Lord was sold; the same in amount as that which was appointed in the book of Exodus, 21. 32, to be paid for a bondservant when killed by cattle. So vile was He esteemed who gave "his life a ransom for many." Matt. 20. 28. So exactly did He take on Him, not "the form" only "of a servant," Phil. 2. 7, but the estimation of a slave.

Preparations are now made by the disciples for celebrating the passover, Christ instructing them at what house they should make it ready. In the midst of the supper He tells them the strange tidings that one of them shall betray Him. "Lord, is it I?" was a question in which they might naturally express their surprise and concern. In this question even Judas joined; willing probably to cover his design with a profession of zeal, that implied his innocence. To the rest Jesus answered, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." By which sign each of them might clearly see that it was Judas who was meant, and not himself. To Judas, when he repeated the inquiry, our Lord answered "Thou hast said;" that is, Thou hast said the truth. In which answer we see that plainness of speech must be preferred, even at the risk of seeming rude, to such civility as is founded on deceit. And in the sign given we have fulfilled the prophecy of the Psalms, 41. 9, "Yea, even mine own familiar friend whom I trusted, who did also eat of my bread, hath laid great wait for me."

The apostles inquired, "every one of them," "Lord, is it I?" though all of them, except one, must have known, that they had no intention to betray their Master. It was no more than due humility, even in case of sin so heinous, to distrust themselves, to apprehend the possibility of transgressing, and to confess this their apprehension to Him who knoweth the heart. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10. 12. It is to be hoped that there are many and gross sins, of which our consciences bear witness that we are guiltless. But there are, we know, some persons who thus sin. And their nature, let us remember, is no other than our own. Aware then of our frailty, aware how many things there are that may tempt us to betray our heavenly Lord, let us ask within ourselves each enormity we hear of in the world, "Lord, is it I?" I know not my own heart. I dare not trust it. I presume not to be certain but what I may yet commit this gross offence, and desert the cause of Thee, my Saviour. By thy grace alone, I have hitherto escaped. In thy strength alone, I yet stand upright. And thou only knowest how long. Give me this blessed assurance, that I shall take no part with thy murderers; lest for me also it had been good that I had never been born. Thus may we do well to ask with the disciples, "Lord, is it I?" Our answer we may find in the word of God. For there we are plainly told what persons they are who "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Heb. 6. 6. Let us apply to our own consciences what there we read, as the answer of Christ Himself, And let us pray that we may never deserve for our reply his words to Judas, "Thou hast said."

Christ eateth his last supper, and warneth Peter of his fall.

26 And as they were eating, 'Jesus took bread, and || blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

30 And when they had sung an † hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, ' All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, ' I

will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

32 But after I am risen again, ' I will go before you into Galilee.

33 Peter answered and said unto him, ' Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, ' Verily I say unto thee, ' That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, ' Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

1 1 Cor. 11. 24.

|| Many Greek copies have, gave thanks.

2 Zech. 13. 7.

4 Mark 14. 28. & 16. 7.

† Or, psalm.

5 Mark 14. 27. John 16. 32.

6 John 13. 38.

§ 99. *That pride goeth before a fall.*

It was when they were eating the passover that our Lord appointed the sacrament of his body and blood. He took in a solemn manner some of the bread on the table; and He "blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." The passover was kept in memory of the Israelites being spared, when the Lord smote all the firstborn of the Egyptians. The lamb appointed to be slain was a figure or representation of Christ, of Christ to be slain for the sins of men. Here our Lord may be considered to say, I ordain a new figure. I appoint that you eat bread as my body, and that in doing so you shall be partakers of the benefit of my death. And in like manner "he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." So that the cup, we see, was for all, as well as the bread; and there can be no doubt that the withholding it from the congregation is a grievous error in that foreign church, which once prevailed in our land. And errors such as this it is important for us to note; because they justify a separation among Christians, which otherwise is much to be regretted, and which, except it be for due cause, is the sin of schism. And we should here note also, that the whole sacrament ought to be regularly received by all Christians who would obtain the "remission of sins" here spoken of. Greatly is it to be deplored, that out of congregations so large as frequent our churches, only few in comparison should be found to attend on this divine ordinance. Let those of us, who are in the habit of attending, both take heed how we receive, and, when we have received, take heed how we behave afterwards. Nothing would so much win others to communion as the manifest growth in Christian grace of those whom they know to communicate. But if they see our lives as careless as before, our conduct as much influenced by the love of the world, our thoughts no less vain, our conversation no less light; can we wonder that they still stay away? Can we doubt, that in staying away, they are confirmed by the ill fruit they find of our attendance?

After instituting this sacrament our Lord adds, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." In which words He seems to speak of what took place after his resurrection. For it was "in breaking of bread," Luke 24. 35, that He was then known or recognised by the apostles. And that breaking of bread was probably no other than a celebrating of this supper both with bread and wine. And this wine He did then drink in a new and strange manner, it being as great a miracle for the body He then had to eat and drink, as for the body He had at first to walk upon the sea. See Matt. 14. 25. And thus doth He in this sacrament still eat and drink anew with us, each time we receive it faithfully; fulfilling to the end of time these his gracious words: "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3. 20.

After the supper, when they were gone out to the mount of Olives, our Lord warned the disciples that they should the very same night be offended, that is, made to fall, because of Him; that is, because of his being betrayed, they should desert Him. And being sure of their leaving Him, He tells them where He would meet them when He should have risen from the dead. Peter hereupon answers most positively for himself, as did also the other disciples, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." How utterly he failed to make good this boast is well known to all. Let us note, then, the deceitfulness of the heart. Let us learn how mad is boasting in one so frail as man. Far be it from us either outwardly to boast, or even inwardly to feel sure, that we shall never fall away. We know not how soon the enemy of souls may be suffered to prevail against us. We know not how suddenly the world by its pleasures, the scorner by his laugh, or our own hearts by our own evil passions, may tempt us to forget and deny our Lord. To be proud in our own strength, is the worst of weakness. To boast that we can stand, is the most sure way to stumble. And when we are warned that we are likely to be offended and to fall, let us own our weakness, and have recourse to that strength of God which alone can enable us to stand.

Christ prayeth in agony at Gethsemane.

36 'Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

¹ Mark 14. 32. Luke 22. 39.

§ 100. *How to behave and how to pray when in affliction.*

Peter and the two sons of Zebedee were the same disciples who saw the transfiguration on mount Tabor. See Matt. 17. 1. Having been admitted to this glimpse of his glory, they were the more fit to sustain this sad sight of his distress. He bade them therefore watch near Him whilst He prayed. He bade them watch with Him, that is, join in prayer for strength to help in this his time of need. "Yet could not they watch with Him one hour." "He cometh unto his disciples, and findeth them asleep." So hard of attainment is that truly Christian grace, to feel a lively interest in the sorrows of each other! So apt is the human heart to indulge in sloth and indifference, at scenes which would draw tears of anguish from the Saviour of mankind!

In this agony of our Lord, we may see what is meant by "the remembrance of our sins" being "grievous unto us, the burden of them intolerable." (Liturgy.) Such was the burden, such was the remembrance of our sins to Him, who, being Himself without sin, was made sin for us. See 2 Cor. 5. 21. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Isaiah 53. 5. And shall not we feel for our own ourselves? Let our sorrow be lively like to his, whose soul was thus for our sakes sorrowful "unto death." Let us mourn for sin as for the worst of evils, as for that which cost Christ his painful end; as for that which, unless we repent, will cost us to die eternally.

Next we have here a pattern of resignation. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Isaiah 53. 10. Many afflictions in all probability, and some of them severe, it will please God, ere death, to lay on us. Or, if not, there is death itself, an affliction which no one can escape. Would we then know how best to bear our griefs? Let us study by this pattern in the garden of Gethsemane. There we may see one who was both God and man, one who as man was without spot of sin, visited by sorrow the most severe. Was his soul insensible to the burden of woe? Did the divine nature so uphold the human spirit, as that He could bear without feeling it, the dreadful load? Far from it. His words and outward agony expressed the anguish of his soul. Thrice did He ask with earnest prayer that the cup He had to drink, the death to die, might pass from Him. Yet thrice also did He resign Himself to his Father's will. And thus have we plain proof of how much He suffered, and how patiently He submitted to suffer. Let not us then in our affliction try so much not to feel, as feeling to bear with patience. And not with patience only, but with thanksgiving let us receive the chastisement of God, whensoever by any manner of adversity it shall please Him to visit us.

And let us here learn further how to pray when we are in trouble: "Father, if it be possible." Let us ask of God as of a father, as of one who knoweth both what is possible, and what is good for us, for all. Let us consider how ill we can ourselves judge for ourselves; how often the very evil we deplore turns out to be the best thing that could have befallen us. And above all, let us never doubt, that, as God knows what is best, so is He inclined also to give it us, for his Son's sake. He desires, like a gracious parent, by each chastisement we receive, to make us less unworthy of his love, to draw us nearer to Himself. This if we feel duly, however earnestly we may pray "Let this cup pass from me," we shall not fail in all humility to conclude, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Marvellous is that power of the Almighty which gives us a will at all, independent of his own. Marvellous that wisdom, which whilst we choose freely, yet ordereth all things both in heaven and earth. The more we feel that we have any distinct will of our own, the more we ought in wonder, love, and praise, to conform what will we have to his. Wherever then we can tell certainly what his will is, there let us neither act, nor so much as wish to act otherwise. Where we know it not, and pray for what seems best unto ourselves, there let us add always in devout submission, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Christ is betrayed by Judas.

47 And ¹while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: ²for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, ³that thus it must be?

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

56 But all this was done, that the ⁴scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

¹ Mark 14. 43. Luke 22. 47. John 18. 3.

² Gen. 9. 6. Rev. 13. 10.

³ Isaiah 53. 10.

⁴ Lam. 4. 20.

§ 101. *That in our afflictions the Scriptures are fulfilled.*

Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. And what else do they who make profession of their regard to Christ, and so much the more injure by their unholy lives the Christian cause? With their lips they boast of being Christians. In their lives they deceive, they defraud, they slander, they swear, they are proud, irritable, and selfish. With their lips they pray daily to be delivered from evil. And all the while in their hearts they are planning some evil scheme, as of covetousness or impurity. With their lips they proclaim that they believe in Christ, that they love Him, and give up their lives to his service. And all the while they live with no thought of Him at all, much less with any lively faith in Him, much less with any devout love of Him or of his word. Let us beware, lest we be thus found one while to say, "Hail, master," and another to betray our Lord. Certain it is, that if we love Him not, so as to serve Him truly, our profession of his faith does but bring it into the greater contempt. Whenever therefore we frequent his worship, or in any way make profession of being Christians, let us put to ourselves, as from Him, this searching question, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Friend you call yourself. But are you a friend indeed? Are you resolved to do honour to your Lord? Or do you purpose, ere scarce your back be turned, do you purpose at the very next opportunity of sin, to put him to an open shame?

"Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him." And now note how an indiscreet zeal, exceeding the bounds of law and order, may do injury, no less than the traitor's kiss, to the cause of Christ. "Put up again thy sword into his place," is the rebuke of the disciple who drew in defence of his Master this worldly weapon. "Put up thy sword into his place," is a sentence which may well check in us all irritable impatience at such evil in the world as God thinks fit to permit. However grievous the wrong, we must never think to redress it by violence. We must not take into our own hands the law, to which, whether it be well or ill administered, we are bound by God's ordinance to submit. "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Such, we know, is in fact their ordinary end. And such we here learn it is God's will that it should be. And most plainly doth Christ here denounce as sinful all personal violence in private wrongs; and so much also, to say the least, of public wars as might, by Christian policy, be possibly avoided.

Christ could as He here tells his disciples, have assumed at any moment the full majesty of his divine nature. By legions of angels He might have been protected from the enemies who were compassing his death. "But how then," saith He, "shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" The very method of his being taken, namely by subtilty, was itself, as He then adds, a fulfilment of prophecy. "All this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." How cheerfully then ought we also to submit to the very worst that can here befall us, when we consider both our Lord's example, and how truly our own share of affliction is no more than the Scriptures being fulfilled. That we must suffer affliction, take up our cross, be despised of men, and deny ourselves, these are things set down in the Gospel as most likely to happen to all those whom God most loves on earth. No wonder that He allows the wicked in many things to prevail. Legions of angels wait at his bidding to defend his faithful servants. That He suffers them not at once to interfere, argues, not lack of power, but a purpose, which, whether we comprehend it or not, we cannot doubt to be both wise and good. If therefore we are tempted to regret the prosperity of the wicked, to grudge them their abundance, or to murmur at woe befalling those who seem less richly to deserve it, let us bethink ourselves of this answer of our Lord, and task our reluctant hearts to answer, how else "shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Christ is led away to Caiaphas, Peter following.

57 ¹ And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61 And said, This fellow said, ² I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witnesses against thee?

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest

answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, ³ Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

¹ Mark 14. 53. Luke 22. 54. John 18. 13.

² John 2. 19.

³ Ch. 16. 27. 1 Thess. 4. 16. Rom. 14. 10.

⁴ Isaiah 60. 6.

|| Or, rods.

§ 102. *That we should follow close to Jesus at all risks.*

Jesus is now taken by the hands of his enemies. The Shepherd is smitten; and lo, also the sheep are scattered abroad. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." Ver. 56. St. Matthew, a faithful historian, conceals not this fact so little to his own credit. He records of himself, and of all, that they deserted in the hour of his greatest need, their Master Christ. We must except however St. John, as he mentions in his Gospel, 18. 15; and St. Peter, who so lately had declared that he would never by any means be tempted to deny his Lord. But Peter followed Him "afar off;" not into the presence of the high priest, to give testimony in behalf of Christ, but only out of weak curiosity, to sit "with the servants, and see the end."

It was the object of the chief priests and elders to find against Jesus some charge such as they might bring forward before the Roman governor, who alone had now the power of putting criminals to death. Failing to get from their false witnesses any suitable proof, they next try to ensnare Him by artful questions, so as to have Him condemned out of his own mouth. "But Jesus held his peace." See how safe is silence against that enemy of our souls, who rejoices to have us offend with our lips! When tempted by an angry or an idle word to give the adversary occasion to accuse us, let us call to mind this instance of our Lord's behaviour, and with Jesus hold our peace.

Being now further very solemnly adjured, that is, put upon his oath by the high priest, to say whether He were the Christ the Son of God, He answered plainly, "Thou hast said;" that is, Thou hast said the truth. Here therefore we have his own word for it, that He was the very Messiah whom the Jews in their Scriptures had been taught to expect; and that being so, being the seed of the woman, the son of Abraham, and the son of David, He was at the same time most truly the Son of God. To this He added, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." This the high priest pronounced to be blasphemy; meaning that Jesus took to Himself the honour due to God. And to him the rest agreed, saying, "He is guilty of death." Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him." They began to treat Him as in times before the Gospel they used commonly to treat the condemned, not with justice only for the prevention of crime, but with cruelty for their own evil pleasure. And yet had they no power to condemn Him at all, but were forced, as will appear in the next chapter, to take Him afterwards for that purpose before the Roman governor. So utterly unjust was every blow our Lord received. So utterly immerited by any fault of his were those stripes by which we and our sins are healed.

Meantime Peter instead of standing by his Master, was waiting, as we read in what follows, "without in the palace." Ver. 69. And here perhaps he flattered himself that he had kept his boastful words, "yet will I never be offended." But call to mind the end of this account, and you will see how little such half measures avail. This following of Christ, without a steadfast purpose to follow Him even unto death, only exposed Peter to the more grievous fall.

Be not then, as were they of Laodicea, "neither cold nor hot." Rev. 3. 15. Follow Christ, not, as did Peter in this instance, afar off, but close. Resort to where He is in his ordinances, not for any company's sake, save his; not to see aught out of curiosity, but out of a devout desire to be near to Him. In the world there arise against Him false witnesses continually. Shrink not from bearing testimony to his Gospel truth. Though they scoff, dare you to be serious. Though they rail at his religion, be you free to confess that it is the ground of your dearest hope. Though they count for either hypocrites or fools all who own to walking by faith in Him, be not you ashamed to declare that in this faith you strive now to live, and by it you trust that you shall live eternally. Draw not back from any occasion where you may hope to do this profitably, or where you feel it to be your duty to do it faithfully; leaving the event, in all humility, to God.

Christ is denied of Peter.

69 'Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, 'Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

70 But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, 'This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know

the man.

73 And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

¹ Mark 14. 66. Luke 22. 55. John 18. 25.

§ 103. *That we should never be ashamed of Christ and his Gospel.*

Thus ended that imprudent boasting: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Ver. 33. Thrice ere the cock crowing was the engagement broken. Thrice did St. Peter deny his Lord. The first time "a damsel came unto him, saying, 'Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.'" This led him to deny with falsehood, "I know not what thou sayest." He made pretence of not understanding her words. Next he violated the solemnity of an oath, that appeal to Almighty God which was sanctioned by Himself, and is agreed upon amongst men, for "an end of all strife," Heb. 6. 16; "he denied with an oath, I do not know the man." The third time he was found out to be a Galilean by his manner of speaking. "Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear," that is, not merely to deny with a solemn oath, but with imprecations on himself, and curses on those who addressed him, "*saying*, I know not the man."

Here we see most signally fulfilled the words of Christ, "This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Ver. 34. Here we see how exactly He knows the hearts of men, and can tell what sins they will commit when most they profess purpose to obey. Here we see the danger of a presumptuous trust in our own strength, and how sure all are to fall, who rely not on the grace of Christ, and work not in his strength. And more especially we should here observe the close connexion which there is between one sin and another. We should lay to heart how hard it is to stop, if we once begin, as did this apostle, wilfully to deny the truth. First he was ashamed of Christ as being in bonds, and afraid of the like treatment for himself. Fear, and false shame, soon brought him to deceit and perjury. Till at last, to make his falsehood the more believed, he affected to break out into a passion, with cursing and swearing, at the very thought of being taken for a follower of Christ.

But now note how bitterly he wept, the moment he became aware of his sin, the moment that the crowing of the cock reminded him of his having denied his Master Christ, "he went out and wept bitterly." No longer had he any taste for the company which had before entertained him; "he went out." No longer did he feel that vain curiosity to see the end, which seems chiefly to have drawn him to follow Christ to the palace of the high priest; "he went out." And not merely did he thus absent himself from the sight which he went to see, but he retired on purpose to offer the tears of repentance to that Father which seeth in secret; "he went out, and wept bitterly."

Seldom or never are we tempted to deny Christ exactly in the same way as St. Peter did. For to us it is a credit to be called Christians; to us it would be a disgrace to profess of Jesus of Nazareth, "I know not the man." Yet not far from such denial is the sin of those, who are in any sense ashamed of Him or of his words, in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation. Such are they, who, when they must know far better, join the laugh, of very common occurrence, at whatsoever is holy and good. Such are they who so much as smile in silence when "fools make a mock at sin." Prov. 14. 9. Such are they who omit to pray or praise at proper seasons, out of regard to the presence of a stranger. Such are they who submit at any season to transgress their Lord's will, out of deference to the fear of man. Rather let us prefer the cross of Christ crucified, to the praise of the whole world. Let us resolve, through evil report and good report, both to put our whole trust in Him, and to own also to all men that we do so. And if in any thing we should ever fail so to do, if in any thing we should through fear or shame approach to a denial of Christ, let us with St. Peter go out, and weep bitterly. Let our repentance cost us tears. Let it give us a distaste for the haunts of sin; for the occasions, and accompaniments, and memorials of the offence we have committed. From these let us go out; these let us entirely renounce; that we may weep in secret before God, those tears of heartfelt sorrow which He will wipe away. See Rev. 21. 4.

Oh may we pause, ere next we stoop to sin; and think how grievous is the fall we venture, how hard to stop, how painful to retrieve! Oh may we never idly gaze for pleasure, at those vain sights of this world's triumph, which should wring our hearts with sorrow! Oh may we never vainly boast, never trust presumptuously in ourselves! But trusting in God through Jesus Christ, oh may we never be offended!

Christ is delivered bound to Pilate. Judas hangeth himself.

1 When the morning was come, ¹ all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

2 And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is *that* to us? see thou to *that*.

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the

¹ Mark 15. 1. Luke 22. 66. John 18. 28.

⁴ Zech. 11. 12.

temple, ² and departed, and went and hanged himself.

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Wherefore that field was called, ³ The field of blood, unto this day.

9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, || whom they of the children of Israel did value;

10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

² Acts 1. 18.

³ Acts 1. 19.

|| Or, whom they bought of the children of Israel.

§ 104. *The parts of true repentance ; its difficulty, and necessity.*

The chief priests and elders had already pronounced Jesus to be guilty, and had treated Him as a criminal under sentence of death. We find here plain proof that their proceedings were utterly unlawful. For in the morning following they were forced to take counsel against Him, that is, to frame some new plausible accusation, that they might persuade the Roman governor to have Him killed. Whilst He was for this purpose being bound, and carried away, ere yet the council had broken up, they are visited by "Judas which had betrayed him." In what followed, we see the awful condition, both of him who sold, and of them who bought, the life of the innocent Jesus. Judas "repented himself," but not till it was too late to repent to any useful purpose. And the rulers, who had yet time for effectual repentance, put aside the thought with the self righteous answer, "What is that to us? see thou to that."

Judas, it is expressly said, "repented himself;" yet straightway "went and hanged himself." It is not all repentance then that is effectual. True, he confessed his offence. And this costs some sacrifice of pride. True, he was sorry for his sin. For else he would not have confessed it at all. True, he brought again the thirty pieces of silver. And this is a step in penitence so painful, that few take it, except those who are in earnest. Yet one thing was wanting. For besides sorrow, besides confession, besides restitution, there is needful for that repentance on which pardon waits, there is needful a real change of heart and soul from the love of evil, to the love of good. And this it appears Judas did not attain to, this he had neither time nor grace to reach. For no sooner had he confessed, "I have sinned," and "cast down the pieces of silver in the temple," than he committed that most hopeless of all sins, self murder. There is a time, let us remember, for all things, see Eccles. 3. 11; a time for repentance, and a time, when repentance is too late. Let us beware therefore for ourselves, lest we put off the invitation to repent, by applying to our accusing conscience the words of these chief priests, "What is that to us?" Many things we may find hereafter to have been sin to us, which here we persuade ourselves concern us not. Such especially are those offences of others, which they have been encouraged in by any word or example of ours. Such are those sins, which, but for our neglect, others might have learnt to avoid. In a state where we are so closely connected with each other, and when the influence of each action we perform is so extensive, there is no sin that can be committed in the same family, scarcely in the same world, of which we may safely say, "What is that to us?" By prayer, if by no other means, we are concerned to intercede for all mankind. And must we not, by neglect of prayer, become concerned in all their sins? And are we not, if not aware of this, like in a degree to those blind rulers, who, having covenanted with Judas for innocent blood, then asked him, "What is that to us?"

The chief priests, though blind to their own pollution, scrupled to put the silver into the treasury, because it was "the price of blood." They laid it out therefore in the purchase of a burial place for strangers. Such is the conscience of the ungodly; to strain at a gnat whilst they swallow a camel, see Matt. 23. 24; to find sin in the silver, but none in themselves. Such is the hospitality, such the alms of the oppressor. With one hand he pays the price of blood, with the other he buys a burial ground for strangers. With one hand he deals in cruelty and fraud, with the other sets forth a feast for his friends, or deals out a pittance to the poor, or bestows on some public use for strangers what is due to his own nearer relatives. Ill fares it with that bounty which is supplied out of the gains of ungodliness. We must first be just, before we can be charitable. One penny unjustly taken, unfairly gained, robs of grace a whole fortune bountifully bestowed. Let him therefore, who has in any matter wronged his brother, first repent, with restitution to the injured; that what remains may be his own to dispose of. To give what has been got by any kind of sin, by fraud or violence, by oppressing the poor, profaning the sabbath, or concealment of another's right, to give whilst these wrongs are unrepented, unredressed, this is like the chief priests buying a field to bury strangers, instead of hastening, whilst there yet was time, to save the innocent blood.

Christ standeth before the governor. Pilate washeth his hands.

11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

14 And he answered him to never a word; inasmuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

15 ¹ Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many

things this day in a dream because of him.

20 ² But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said unto them, * Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

¹ Luke 23. 17.

² John 18. 40. Acts 3. 14.

§ 105. *How the prayer of the swearer is fulfilled.*

Pilate could not without great cruelty ask our Lord to accuse Himself of treason against Caesar. He took however this oppressive method of inquiry; saying, "Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest," that is, thou sayest the truth. "And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing." Hence we learn both when to be silent, and when to speak. A false charge we may meet with silence, not answering again. But if there be a question which we are constrained to answer, a truth which our silence might seem to deny; that truth we are bound to tell, however great the inconvenience; that truth we are bound to tell, though like the reply of our blessed Lord, it were to cost us life itself.

The governor was all the while aware "that for envy they had delivered him." He had been warned also when first he sat down on the judgment seat, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." These things made him desirous to release Jesus. But, at the same time he desired also to please those who had accused our Lord. And as is commonly the case with such as would serve two masters, he fell into so much the greater sin. He first proposed to the people, according to the custom of releasing to them a prisoner at the feast, that they should choose Christ for the person to be set at liberty. He hoped probably, that the multitude, in whom the choice lay, would be no parties to the envy which the rulers entertained. "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." So blindly does that man choose who listens to evil counsel. So many times are we persuaded by evil company, or by our own evil passions, or by the evil enemy of our souls, to prefer as it were Barabbas to Jesus, the friendship of a wicked world to the love of our Saviour Christ.

"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Pilate should have done his own duty, instead of consulting the wishes of others, especially in a matter where he knew already their disposition to be evil. When we have not the courage to do right, let us at least not add hypocrisy to fear; or ask counsel of the wicked, to be emboldened in doing wrong. In vain does the governor thus again appeal to them, asking "Why, what evil hath he done?" He knew beforehand that none could be proved. And the Jews, though they could mention none, "cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified." At length, in order to throw the blame from himself on them, Pilate "washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person." As if any washing of the hands could cleanse the conscience, or wipe off the stain of murder from one who wilfully condemned the innocent to death.

The Jews, indeed, in the hardness of their hearts, were willing to take, if they might, the whole guilt upon themselves. "His blood be on us, and on our children." And against them most fearfully has this curse been made good, even up to this present day. Most fearfully in them have been fulfilled the words of the Psalmist; "His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him." Psalm 109. 16. Scattered they are through every quarter of the earth, and every where subject to the signal judgments which these words of their own provoked. Let the swearer whenever he sees them consider the true meaning and sure consequence of each oath he utters. What else is it than a prayer that his own soul may perish? a prayer, which, as may be seen in this sad instance, He whom it affronts, knows how to fulfil? But let the faithful Christian from the same sad sight, and from the record of this same hardened imprecation, learn to praise the goodness of God who out of all this violence and cruelty has wrought the redemption of mankind. Let this curse of the Jews be turned by us into a prayer, that the blood of Christ may be on us and on our children, not for the condemnation, but for the saving, of the soul.

Christ is delivered to be crucified.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!

¹ John 19. 1.

|| Or, governor's house.

30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

² Mark 15. 21. Luke 23. 26.

³ John 19. 17.

§ 106. *That it is good for us to be afflicted.*

Whilst Barabbas is released, Jesus is scourged, and delivered to be crucified. Whilst the wicked prosper, they often who most love God, and whom God most loves, are chastened by affliction or want, by sorrow, by sickness, or by death. Whenever it may be our lot thus to suffer, let us turn for our comfort and direction to this view of the sufferings of our Lord. First He is scourged, then stripped, that He might the more be put to shame; then clothed in mockery with a scarlet robe, a crown as for a king put upon his head, and a reed by way of sceptre in his hand. "And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head." Here we see fulfilled the account in Isaiah, 50. 6, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Are they then pains of body or of mind that occur to disturb our peace, that would tempt us, if we listen to the tempter's voice, would tempt us to repine, to murmur, or to rebel? Here we have strong instances of each kind, endured for our sakes by Christ. What racking of our members with disease should seem hard to the disciples of a Lord, who Himself submitted to be scourged? What insult ought to move indignation in a Christian; when Christ was spit upon, and mocked, and smitten on the head? Yet how commonly is a blow thought to be more than man can bear from man without revenge! And a single word of slight or ridicule, how grievously does it many times embroil the peace of a family, or the harmony of friends. Let it be the settled purpose of our minds, beforehand, that we would bear, not sorrow only and sickness, but insult even and blows, with meekness, after the example of our Lord, for his sake, and through the grace He gives.

After this ill usage, which the soldiers in their cruelty had for their own pleasure inflicted on our Lord, they next "led him away to crucify him." To crucify means to fasten alive on the cross, in order to the death of the person so fastened. And the cross consisted of a great beam of wood fixed upright in the ground, with another smaller piece across it near the top. To this the body of the sufferer was fastened by large nails driven through the hands and feet. By which means he was sure to undergo, until death took place, the utmost pain which the human body could bear. Upon arriving at the place of execution, "they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall." This was a draught of strong and sour wine, mixed with drugs fit to stupefy the senses of the person crucified. Our Lord tasted it, in order to fulfil every prophecy, every portion of the bitterness of his lot on earth. But "when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." For He needed no such help of art towards bearing the pain of the cross. And He designed to bear it patiently in our behalf, with all the senses of the soul alive.

Here then we may observe the folly of attempting to stupefy our sense of affliction, either by wine and drugs, or by the dissipations of idle company and vain amusement. These things, if ever we have been tempted for that end to taste, let us henceforth know their bitterness. Let us resolve with Christ, to bear both our cross, and the shame and pain of it, without any such sinful intoxication. Many are the uses of affliction, such as patience, contentment, and a thankful persuasion that all things, through God's love, work together for our good. These lessons we should never learn from sorrow, if we were to seek always worldly comforts to divert its force. Would we derive from it that spiritual benefit which the chastisement of our heavenly Father is always designed to promote? Let us refuse to drink the offered cup of sensual pleasure. Let us give no ear to those ill judging friends, who would drive away all thought by idle talk, or help us to waste in trifles these most precious of all hours for penitence and prayer. Let us choose rather to feel our affliction to the full, that so we may use it for the best, and experience the uttermost of this blessed truth, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. 12. 6.

Make us, blessed Lord, patient in tribulation, and meek under the assaults of injury and scorn! Help us, when reviled, to revile not again; when we suffer, to threaten not; see 1 Pet. 2. 23; whosoever would smite us on the right cheek, to turn to him the other also; whosoever would take away our coat, to let him have our cloak also. See Matt. 5. 39, 40.

Christ is crucified.

35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, ¹They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

36 And sitting down they watched him there;

37 And set up over his head his accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple,

¹ Ps. 22. 18.

and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 ²He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

² Ps. 22. 8. Wis. 2. 16, 17, 18.

§ 107. *That we must believe in Christ crucified.*

"And they crucified him." They nailed Him to the cross. They pierced, as David had foretold, see Ps. 22. 17, his hands and his feet. "And sitting down they watched him there;" thus fulfilling what is added in the same Psalm and verse, "they stand staring and looking upon me." The parting of his garments by lot, had in like manner been described beforehand by David. See Ps. 22. 18. And the fact of his being crucified between two thieves, was no more than Isaiah, see 53. 12, had plainly set down. "He was numbered with the transgressors." Thus numerous and minute were the circumstances expressed by prophecy, in order to mark, and certify, an event in itself so little to be expected. So that instead of taking offence at the shame of the cross, we know that if Jesus had not been crucified, He could not have been the Christ. And we know for this very reason amongst others, because He was crucified, that "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

"And they crucified him." What humility is here! Christ the King of Glory, the express image of the Father, the only begotten Son of God, "God of God, Light of light, very God of very God," (Nicene Creed,) Christ is made man, is made sin for us, is nailed to the cross, is crucified with thieves. "And they crucified him." What patience, what meekness, what forbearance is this! He who had legions of angels at command, He who could with like ease have burst the bonds of his captivity, or rent the world asunder: He suffered the most vile of his creatures to mar with cruel usage that human form in which He had veiled his glory. He bare with them as they cast lots on his vesture, watched with savage joy the agony his countenance expressed, and set over Him as an accusation the being King of the Jews, when He was indeed King of kings, and Lord of lords. "And they crucified him." What love, what greater than all other love is this, that He laid down his very life, and that, in the most painful way of death, for us whom He hath called friends! He laid down his life for us, that we might live for ever. He laid down his life, that God might for his sake forgive our sins, make us the children of his love, and bless our souls in heaven. "And they crucified Him." And thus from Christ crucified being the foundation of our Christian hope, we learn that the cross, when dispensed in affliction to ourselves, is the gift of God's love, and the mark of our being his sons by adoption of grace.

"And they that passed by reviled him." They reproached Him with his prophecy of rebuilding the temple in three days; not knowing that "he spake of the temple of his body." John 2. 21. They put it to Him to confirm his word by coming down from the cross. So also did the scribes and elders, and even the thieves, or at least one of them, reproach Him, saying, "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Thus it is that men desire to make terms for themselves; settling on what conditions they would believe God, instead of thanking Him for the inestimable blessing of being saved on the terms He has already revealed. The terms are these, that we should believe, with a lively active working faith, in Christ crucified; not in Christ reigning with earthly glory, but in Christ exalted on the cross; there once crucified for our sins, and henceforth to reign in our hearts for ever.

Far be it from us then to excuse any lurking root of evil unbelief, by saying that we would have more lively faith, on some condition of our own devising. Far be it from us to covet for ourselves any lot more easy than the cross which Christ assigns us; or to wish for any more glorious object of our faith than Christ crucified with thieves. That crown of thorns should outshine in our view all crowns of gold and precious stones. It is the crown of patience, humility, and love. That cross should be by us esteemed of more dignity than any earthly throne, for thence issues forth continually a fountain for all uncleanness, even blood that can redeem our sinful souls. And those thieves with whom He suffered should remind us of that excellency in his love, that He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" Matt. 9. 13; should convince us, that "when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5. 8. Come not then down, Thou blessed Lord, come not Thou down from the cross! Save others, not Thyself! Bear yet a while that agony of pain, and shame, and nameless horror! Bear that intolerable burden of our sins! Bear that breath of the displeasure of our heavenly Father, in which we must be else consumed! Come not Thou down, till "it is finished," John 19. 30, come not Thou down from the cross! save not Thyself, but us!

Christ yieldeth up the ghost.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud

¹ Ps. 22. 1.

voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

² Ps. 69. 21.

§ 108. *That we should hold the truth not in fear but in love.*

All things in heaven and in earth are moved at the sufferings and death of Christ. First, whilst He was yet alive "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." The light of heaven was withheld, as if to signify that He, who then expired, was "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1. 9. And that we might the better know how much He underwent, He called out, towards the end of his sufferings, in the words of David, see Ps. 22. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Not as though He were really in despair; but to prove that He felt most intolerable the burden of human sin. Not as though He could not have prayed in words of his own; but that He would shew us how to turn in all our troubles to the words of Scripture, and there to learn both how to feel and how to express our feelings. Would that in our sins and sorrows we were more solicitous lest God forsake us, than careful, as we are apt to be, for our worldly character or comfort! Would that we could feel, as did our blessed Lord for us, and as our church teaches us to say for ourselves, that "the remembrance of our misdoings is grievous unto us, the burden intolerable." (See Liturgy.)

In this agony of Christ, "some of them that stood there" either mistook his words, or purposely made a mock of what He said. Whilst one, more humane perhaps than the rest, offered Him, by way of relief to his painful thirst, a sponge of vinegar to drink. It is no new thing for the wicked to make a mock at the prayers of the devout. Nor is it seldom that ignorance is the cause of that scorn, which no ignorance, being wilful, can excuse. Let us endeavour both to know our Saviour's need, and knowing it let us labour to relieve it. Let us remember, it is in the least of them who are his brethren that He would have us shew kindness to Himself. When we see them in distress, when we hear their cry for help, let us conceive ourselves to hear the voice of Christ, to see Him hanging on the cross; and let us run in haste, to minister according to our ability, but in any case in haste to minister, willing, anxious, and making speed to minister, to the necessities of his saints!

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." Thus were those pains at length concluded which Christ once suffered for all our sins. Thus did He become truly a sin offering for us, a sacrifice, a Passover, or Paschal Lamb, even the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13. 8. He "yielded up the ghost." Let not us then too fearfully apprehend the sure approach of our own decease. We are called upon to enter on a path which Christ has trod before. In that dark passage let us trust to Him for aid. Let us be assured that through Him it has been made the gate of glory. He "yielded up the ghost." And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent," signifying that the temple of his body was now severed from his soul by death. And signifying also, as the apostle intimated to the Hebrews, that our High Priest was now by his own blood to enter once into the holy place, through the veil of his flesh, having obtained eternal redemption for us. See Heb. 9. 12; 10. 20. He "yielded up the ghost." "And the earth did quake." Either an earthquake then took place in Judæa, or the whole globe was made to tremble in its course, at the moment when Jesus breathed his last. "And the rocks rent," in consequence of the commotion in the earth, and fulfilling also in some sort what our Lord had said, that the stones should cry out in witness of Him. See Luke 19. 40. "And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose;" in token, as it should seem, that by the death of Christ the bands of death were loosed, and that, even in the case of those who died before the hour of his suffering.

Great was the fear which fell upon the centurion, and on them that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw "those things that were done." And most important was the confession they were then forced to make: "Truly this was the Son of God." Fear made them own the truth, when it was now too late; when those cruel scourgings had been inflicted, when that cross had done the work of death. Oh, how far better is it to hold the truth in love, than to own it reluctantly in fear! Oh, how much better to believe in Christ, when meekly submitting to affronts, than when He shall make the earth to quake and the graves to give up their dead! Then will it be too late, if we confess Him not now before men, too late to confess Him before the angels of heaven; too late for hope, for love, for joy; too late, except to fear greatly.

Christ is buried; and the sepulchre sealed.

55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Josce, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

57 ¹ When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

¹ Mark 15. 42. Luke 23. 50. John 19. 38.

§ 109. *That our bodies must see corruption.*

It is recorded to the especial honour of three women, amongst others, that when the disciples had fled they "were there beholding," though "afar off." They enjoyed for their reward the sight of those wonders which attended their Master's death. And of two of them we read in what follows that they were the first to whom his resurrection was made known. To love our Lord unto the end, to be faithful to Him in the hour of his affliction, these are instances of faithfulness not strictly within our reach; seeing that He is now gone up on high, and has led captivity captive. See Ephes. 4. 8. Would we know whether we have the disposition so to do, whether we should have done so had we been living when He died, whether we should have fled with the disciples, or stayed with these faithful women? Let us consider how far we now venture to own before men the strength of our attachment to his holy cause; how far before those who now despise his name and words, we avow our faith, and make good our profession of love, by manfully contending under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil.

Another instance of the like courage and fidelity we see in Joseph of Arimathea. "He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus." He is here said to be "a rich man;" agreeably to the prophet's account, that the Messiah should be "with the rich in his death." Isai. 53. 9. The more he possessed, the more he must have put in jeopardy, by this devout instance of respect to the last remains of Jesus. Regardless of the enmity he might incur, as well from the people as from the rulers of the Jews, he treated with all due honour the body of his crucified Lord. "He wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock." These things shew the certainty of our Saviour's death. They who handled his body, who committed it to the grave, were friends who must have carefully examined the least signs, had there been any, of remaining life. And for our more full assurance that Christ was during this time most truly dead, we have the testimony of St. Peter, who has told us, 1 Pet. 3. 19, that He went during this interval, and "preached unto the spirits in prison," that is, ministered in some way unknown to us, to those departed souls, "which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah," that is, before the time of the deluge.

Thus is our blessed Lord still employed in doing good at the very hour when his body is laid in the grave. His enemies meanwhile, in order to prevent any pretended resurrection, obtain a guard from the Roman governor, and seal the very stone at the door of the sepulchre. Now then we know of a certainty that the dead body is there shut in, and that no human power can take it thence. The Jews themselves have set the seal. Stationed at the entrance is a guard of Roman soldiers, men to whose arms the world was subject, to whom slumber at their post was certain death. The disciples are dispersed in fear. And only two helpless women remain, out of all that were concerned for the honour of their Lord. Most sure then we must be, if Jesus did rise, that He did rise truly from the dead.

Here let us pause. And whilst we wait the issue, let us reflect that in like manner our bodies must be laid in the silent grave. We know that we shall be soon brought low by death, unless Christ, ere yet we die, first come to judgment. Our sense will cease to act, and the very friends who most love us will assist to commit us to the ground from which we were taken. Dust we are, and unto dust we must return. See Gen. 3. 19. There must these our bodies grow gradually corrupt; there perish in dishonour; there waste, till there be no form or fragment left. How dare we now pamper them with excess, clothe them in finery, or defile them with forbidden lusts? How hesitate to offer them, by purity, temperance, and sobriety, by selfdenial, and by activity in doing good, a lively sacrifice unto God?

Christ is risen, and appeareth to the women.

1 In the ¹ end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there ² was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

¹ Mark 16. 1. John 20. 1.

|| Or, *had been*.

§ 110. *How we may have joy in the presence of our Lord.*

On the third day, two of the faithful women, who had watched on the first, returned to see the sepulchre. What a sight was there! Earth trembling! An angel descending from heaven! The guard of soldiers become through fear of him as dead men! And He, that was crucified and dead, no longer there, but risen! "And the angel answered, and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." Fear was fitting for those who watched Christ for enmity, but not for them who sought Him with devotion. And the same angel, at whose presence the keepers became as dead with alarm, was commissioned to bid the women who devoutly sought our Lord, "Fear not ye." This was their encouragement. Let this be ours. Whatever difficulties beset us; whether from friends or foes we apprehend aught of danger; it is enough that we seek heartily "Jesus which was crucified." It is enough that, whatever be our errand, we are bent on acting according to his will, on fulfilling his commands, on attaining to the crown of glory He hath promised. Then need we fear no harm, either in this world, or in the next.

But chiefly may we be set above all unworthy fear by those other words of the angel, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." What evil here befalls us more formidable than death? Yet death does through Christ lead only to our rising again. So was it with Himself; and so through Him will it be with us. He the firstfruits, "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." 1 Cor. 15. 23. What place can be more awful than the sepulchre, or than the chamber which is occupied by the body of our brother yet unburied? Let us think, when we have occasion to enter that solemn scene, let us think, of these devout followers of Christ being guided by an angel to see the place "where the Lord lay." Let us think of their surprise when that place was seen to have been left by Him, of their joy when they were told not only that He was not there, but also was "risen, as he said." Might not we also then visit or leave the chamber of the dead, not with fear only, but with great joy; not so much with pain at a sight so grievous, as with gladness at a hope so full of glory?

With these tidings the women departed quickly, as the angel bade them, to tell the disciples that their Lord was risen from the dead. And as they went, "Behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail." At once they knew Him, and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. On which behaviour, recorded without note of censure, we may do well to remark that we not only may give to Christ, without idolatry, but that we cannot deny Him, without irreverence, the worship which is due to Almighty God. Our Lord as well as the angel encourages these devout women, saying, "Be not afraid." And at first we may think it strange that at a sight so full of joy they should feel any fresh tendency to alarm. But there is in death so much to fear, that even the resurrection of the dead seems fearful. Nor should we be able to regard without awe as well as joy, any friend, however dear, who should so rise from the grave. And further, it is not improbable that there was seen in the appearance of our Lord, something of that glorified body, with which we may believe Him to have been then invested. So that we may account for the women being afraid as well by what they saw in Christ's person, as by what they knew of his death and resurrection.

What then will be our emotions when we shall see this same Jesus, manifest in this same glorified body, coming in the clouds of heaven, to pass sentence on all mankind? What power shall then allay our terror? what voice of consolation bid us "Be not afraid!" His own, and no other. His own which then shall say to those who now truly love Him, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Ch. 25. 34. Then will their alarm be turned into joy, their joy such happiness as no words can express. Then will He not only remove all terror from their hearts, but fill them with all pleasure for evermore. There shall they see Him, see Him as He is, all great, all good; see Him, as He hath revealed Himself to be, to them that love Him, all love.

Christ appeareth to the disciples, and sendeth them to baptize.

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

¹ Mark 16. 15.

§ 111. *The essentials of Christian faith, and of Christian practice.*

The soldiers who kept watch had no sooner recovered from their alarm, than they went to tell the chief priests what had happened. "And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers." This was by way of bribing them to give a false account of "the things that were done." So largely do men often give and spend for sin, when they will spare so little for alms! So free are they to squander in a bad cause what in a good one they are resolute to withhold! So backward to bestow on the poor, to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant! So lavish in the indulgence of their own vanity and pride, in the entertainment of those friends who can bid them again! See Luke 14. 12.

The false account for which the elders thus largely paid was this: "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." In which story we may observe this one clear proof of falsehood: How, namely, if they had really been asleep, how could they know what happened in the meantime, whether the body had been stolen, or had of itself risen from the grave? "So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." That is, until the time when the apostle wrote, or about ten years after the death of Christ. To which we may add, that it is reported also to this present time, nearly two thousand years after. And how many of the Jews in the meanwhile must have been hardened in their unbelief by the circulation of this single untruth! And how much, in the obduracy of the Jews have the soldiers who told this falsehood, to answer for, and how much more the rulers who bade them tell it! Far be it from us to deny or to misrepresent the truth! Far be it from us to encourage others in deceit! Far be from us the money which is paid as the wages of deceitfulness! Far be from us that "love of money," which is the root, not only of falsehood, but of "all evil." 1 Tim. 6. 10.

Opposed to this manifest falsehood of the soldiers, we have in this chapter four distinct testimonies to the resurrection of our blessed Lord: the words of the angel to the women; the appearing of Christ to them Himself; the true account which the watch gave to the elders; and, lastly, our Lord's own appearance in Galilee to his disciples. Here it was that He had appointed them to meet Him. Here it was that they "saw him." "And when they saw him, they worshipped him." They, too, offer without hesitation, to Himself, the prayers and praises which belong to God. "They worshipped him: but some doubted." Even of the disciples who were blessed with the sight of our Lord "some doubted." Seeing is not, as it is commonly said to be, believing. Believing means, to be sure of what we cannot see, because God hath told us. And this is indeed the trial of faith, to believe what we deem most strange; to believe what some, what many doubt. Such a thing, and so strange, was what the disciples had to believe, that their Lord whom they then saw, had been dead and was alive again. See Rev. 1. 18. Such a thing, and so strange is that which is revealed to us of the resurrection of our own bodies; that we all, like Jesus Christ, shall rise again in the body, each in his own; though glorified, yet his own. We must believe entirely, that it will be so, though we cannot in any part understand how it will come to pass. We must endeavour to feel as sure of it, as though we had joined this company on the appointed mount, there seen the risen body of our Lord, there heard the last words of love, which He is recorded to have uttered whilst on earth.

Full of affection for mankind were those words: full of care for the salvation of the world. "All power," saith He, "is given unto me," that is, given to the Son of man, in man's behalf, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." This is the use to which he would have his power put, that his flock should be duly fed, and diligently enlarged. The disciples have their plain directions, to teach and to baptize. They are to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." They are to teach men to "observe all things, whatsoever Christ had commanded."

Here then we have set down at the conclusion of this Gospel the essentials of Christian faith and of Christian practice. We are to be baptized, we are to believe, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and

of the Holy Ghost." In our faith we are to conceive of God, first as a Father who made us, and who "like as a father pitieth his own children," even so is merciful to "them that fear him." Ps. 103. 13. We are to conceive of God, secondly, as the blessed Son, who for us and for our salvation was made man, crucified, dead, and buried; who rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven. (See Nicene Creed.) We are to conceive of God, thirdly, as the Holy Ghost, who, from the Father and the Son proceeding, maketh us, if the fault be not our own, holy as He is holy, and pure as He is pure. Thus are we to conceive of that one great Being, in whom we believe as God. And in serving Him we are to take for our direction whatsoever Christ has commanded us. We are to study with earnest attention what the apostles have set down as his word and will. We are to study that we may understand; to understand that we may obey. Then will be fulfilled in us his gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." With us He will be through life, strengthening us by his grace; with us in the hour of death, supporting us by the hope of his appearing; with us in the resurrection from the dead, receiving us into the brightness of his glory.

"Amen." So be it, blessed Lord; soon may thy kingdom come! "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22. 20. Be with us now; and yet come to us hereafter! Be with us, where we are, for our safety, for our comfort, for our peace! But come, if it may be, soon; come, for our greater joy, to take us to the place Thou art gone to prepare, that where Thou art, there we may be also! See John 14. 3.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

§ 112. *The use of having four Gospels.*

ST. Mark was the same person whom St. Peter, 1 Ep. 5. 13. calls "Marcus my son," meaning his disciple in Christianity, a convert of his ministry, and a faithful reporter of the Gospel which he preached. So that, although this writer was not himself an apostle, he had the benefit of an apostle's fatherly instruction; and, probably with his assistance, certainly with the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, composed the history of our Saviour now before us.

That there should be more than one, nay four distinct histories of our Lord's ministry, called Gospels, was ordained by God's providence, as we may plainly see, for several important ends. First, the four Gospels serve as so many independent witnesses; affording to the inquisitive mind of man that very kind of evidence which best admits of being examined, and which is in all human transactions deemed the most satisfactory. For here we may apply what St. Paul quotes from the law of Moses, 2 Cor. 13. 1, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." And we may observe, in confirmation of this remark, how improbable it is that any, except a true account, should have been purposely related in four different histories. A forger of falsehoods confines himself ever carefully to a single tale. Such an one, like Pilate, who meant falsehood though he wrote the truth, answers, when pressed to review his account, "What I have written, I have written." John 19. 22. Whilst faithful witnesses care not how often they repeat their testimony, nor how much their expressions may be thought to vary; content to know that the fact as it took place is a master key to each seeming difficulty, that fits and opens all.

A second use of this diversity of accounts is, that wherever the same transaction is related by more than one of the Evangelists, we are able, by comparing them together, to obtain a more just notion of it, than we could have done from either of them singly. For though they were all under the special guidance of the same Holy Spirit, yet they were evidently so far permitted to relate things according to their own memory or impressions, as to constitute their testimony independent of each other's. And by the confronting of witnesses who agree in the main, we may not only be made more certain that the fact they relate took place; but from the different light in which they viewed it, and out of the very variations in their accounts, we may usually the more fully, and the more exactly, gather the most important circumstances attending it.

Thus are all the parts of Scripture of use, for our instruction in righteousness. Prophets and apostles have not written in vain, Christ hath not spoken his gracious word, but for our endless comfort or eternal condemnation. Let us then give all heed to the study of it; prizing, above all other knowledge, the knowledge of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

John the Baptist, his office. He baptizeth Christ.

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

2 As it is written in the prophets, ¹ Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3 ² The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 ³ John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance || for the remission of sins.

5 ⁴ And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was ⁵ clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not

worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

9 ⁶ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens [†] opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

12 ⁷ And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

¹ Mal. 3. 1. ² Is. 40. 3. Luke 3. 4. John 1. 23.

⁵ Matt. 3. 4.

⁶ Matt. 3. 13.

⁵ Matt. 3. 1.

|| Or, unto.

⁴ Matt. 3. 5.

[†] Or, cloven, or, rent.

⁷ Matt. 4. 1.

§ 113. *That God is for Christ's sake well pleased in them that are his sons.*

St. Mark dates the beginning of this Gospel from the preaching of John the Baptist. And this may signify to us both that baptism, such as our Lord afterwards ordained, is the necessary beginning of the Christian life; and that repentance for the remission of sins is the first in order of all Christian graces, the due preparation for the receiving of the rest. John was, according to one prophet here cited, Mal. 3. 1, a messenger to prepare the way before Christ. And according to another, he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Isaiah 40. 3. The importance which is thus attached to his ministry, should impress on us the necessity of a right preparation for hearing the truth. If Christ could not, or at least did not, preach the Gospel without a messenger to prepare his way before Him, neither must man hope to profit by its preaching, without pains taken to make ready for its influence on the heart.

The means thereto are outward ordinances and inward change. "John did baptize in the wilderness." And again, "It came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan." Here we have two ordinances enforced, the sacrament of Baptism, and the ministry or service of human instruments in the work of God. John did baptize and Jesus came to be baptized. Therefore, however light a matter it may seem to the natural man for the body to be sprinkled with water, baptism must be regarded by the eye of faith as "the washing of regeneration." Tit. 3. 5. Jesus came to be baptized of John. Therefore no person, however great, however good, should think himself above attending on the lawful ministry of any minister, however inferior to himself. They who were baptized confessed their sins, and John preached the baptism of repentance. Therefore no outward washing can suffice without contrition, and change within ourselves. John was clothed in the plainest of dress, and fed on the plainest food. Therefore no change can be relied on within, which works not a change without, selfdenial, and mortification of the flesh, and of the affections and lusts thereof.

Of our Lord it is added, that "straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending," that is, descending like a dove, "upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus on the due performance of Christian baptism, the Spirit descends from heaven on the soul, and the Almighty Father acknowledges us for sons in whom He is well pleased. We see not indeed in this, or in any other Christian ordinance; we see not, we hear not, we feel not the dovelike coming down from heaven of that power, which moves the heart to faithfulness and love. We walk not by sense, but by the evidence of things unseen. We work not in certainty, but in the assurance of hope. And many times after our best endeavours, whether of repentance, or prayer, or attendance on God's word and sacraments, we may be unable to maintain the cheering conviction that we are sons pleasing in his sight.

This, however, is but one of our manifold trials; one only, of those many temptations with which Satan is permitted in the wilderness of this life to assail our souls. Our own evil passions, the worst of wild beasts that here prevail, are ever active for our destruction. Our enemy the devil, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. But he has only a short time. See Rev. 12. 12. Our utmost continuance, what is it but as a forty days out of the whole life, what is it but as a moment out of a year, when compared with the continuance, of the life we look for? Let us then be patient in well doing. Let us be patient, though we are apprehensive of doing ill; though we attain not as we could wish, the comfortable assurance, that God is well pleased in us. He hath spoken thus of his Son. And if only we believe in Christ, if only as faithful sons we love and serve our heavenly Father, He hath spoken it, for Christ's sake, of us.

Christ beginneth to preach, and to call his apostles.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, ¹ Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

16 ² Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired ser-

vants, and went after him.

21 ³ And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22 ⁴ And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23 ⁵ And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

¹ Matt. 4. 12.

² Matt. 4. 18.

³ Matt. 4. 13.

⁴ Matt. 7. 28.

⁵ Luke 4. 33.

§ 114. *That we may not set up our own will against God's.*

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." No such doctrine, no such motives, as these, had been before preached to mankind. Thenceforth, to the present hour they have been the creed and the hope of the whole Christian church. That on our repentance, sin will be forgiven, that on our faith, prayer will be heard, and grace bestowed, the sinful soul justified, and the kingdom of heaven, the reign of holiness and peace and joy, thus established in our hearts on earth, thus secured to us in heaven for ever; these are the truths which the preaching of Jesus proclaims in the Galilee of this world, to them who had else sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. See Matt. 4. 16.

Our Lord selected his apostles in the first instance from the occupation of fishermen. He described the office to which He invited them by a figure well suited to their apprehension, saying, that He would make them "to become fishers of men." In this likening of men to the fishes of the sea we too have for our use a lively picture of the state of the whole human race, wandering as they do by nature through the wide waste of a worldly life. Some we may conceive preying on each other, the fierce on the timid, the strong on the weak, the cunning on the ignorant and dull. Some we see idly sporting in the sunshine of brief enjoyment, devoting to each trifling object that occurs the activity of their utmost strength. Meantime the apostles, and ministers of religion, the appointed fishers of men, cast in according to his several ordinances, the net of the Gospel; those heavenly meshes of hope and fear, of thankfulness and love, which are fitted to engage each human soul in glad captivity to Christ. But how few does this good net effectually retain! How many by obstinate resistance or perverse ingenuity escape into the false liberty of an ungodly life!

Common is the case of those who like the man here mentioned with the unclean spirit refuse to be saved, who are ready to answer to the tidings of God's mercy in Christ, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" This is the very worst symptom of impenitence, to be impatient of healing, to be offended at the gracious offers of redeeming love, to reject Christ in his ordinances, to harbour a distaste for his word, a distrust of his ability or willingness to save. This is saying as it were to Himself, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee." What else indeed do we say whenever we repine under affliction, whenever we murmur at the loss of wealth, or health, or friends? What else when we deem dull, or wearisome, or vexatious, the reproofs of Scripture, or of those who are ordained to enforce its admonitions on the consciences of mankind? What else do we say in our hearts, whenever idly contented with our present attainments we disparage the superior piety of those, whose zeal condemns our sloth, their bounty our niggard alms, their heaven directed thoughts our worldly walk and conversation?

Surely as we ever experience these rebellious thoughts, they are suggested by some unclean spirit, who, though he tear not our outward frame, is defiling the soul within. Let us therefore, awakened to a sense of our condition, have recourse to Him who alone can say effectually, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." The more we feel inclined to resist his will, the more let us pray, purpose, and endeavour, to submit to it entirely our own. For so only shall we become whole and sound, so only at peace within ourselves, so only at peace with God, when that power of choice, which He hath by nature given us, is guided by the directions He reveals to us through grace.

Let not, Lord, our will, but thine be done! Let not, Lord, our will, but thine be ours! Make us to love that which Thou dost order! Make us to hate that which Thou dost forbid! What thou hast chosen for us, make us with all our hearts to choose! And the work which Thou hast given us to do, make us to do it with all our might!

Christ healeth Simon's wife's mother : prayeth in private.

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

29 ¹ And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and

lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

¹ Matt. 8. 14.

|| Or, to say that they knew him.

§ 115. *The duty and manner of private prayer.*

The attendance of Simon Peter on our Lord as an apostle led to the healing of his wife's mother. This shews us how numerous are the advantages of devoutly following Christ; how surely we may expect that our conduct and our prayers, if guided by his word, will redound, not only to our own welfare, but to the benefit of those who are most near and dear to us. "And immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Hence we may be reminded that in our spiritual healing, in our recovery from sin and death to holiness and hope through Christ, our cure is in order to his service. Let us endeavour then in all that we do, to minister unto Christ, and to them that are his. Let us in every word and work have an eye to his glory, and to the good of those our brethren, whom He graciously reckons for his own.

This miracle took place "forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue." It took place then on the sabbath. "And at even, when the sun did set," because they counted the sabbath to be then over, "they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many." Here it seems to be implied that He healed not all, neither cast out the devils from all who were possessed. And so we fear it is in every city. Though all may be gathered at the door, though all, or at least many, frequent the house of God, and profess the faith of Christ: and though also He heal many; yet there are some whom He heals not. Well is it, if even in each single family there be not some who for lack of faith and prayer, partake not now of his healing grace, have no part or lot in his promises of heaven. Let us each, whilst we minister to the good of others, and seek to promote their salvation, neglect not the hope of our own. Let us lay to heart that strait is the door at which we are gathered, narrow the way which leadeth unto life, and that "few there be that find it!" Matt. 7. 14.

Next after these many miracles, we have it recorded of our Lord, that "rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Wherein we see how important is this duty of private prayer, how little excuse for its neglect the most pressing business can afford, how necessary it is for those who are the most deeply engaged in their worldly calling so much the more to give their first waking thoughts to devout communion with God. Remember then, if ever your work is more urgent than common, is more than usual likely to occupy the day, remember, you have so much the more need to ask God for his blessing on your labours; you are so much the more bound to rise early before day, when you may more easily be alone, and pray unto your Father, which seeth in secret. When you are most alone, then are you most close to Him. Then may you most freely express to Him your contrition, your need, your thanksgiving for need supplied, for contrition accepted through Christ in mercy.

Set apart then some fixed time for private prayer. Endeavour to be as far as possible alone. Retire to your own chamber; or, if you have none of your own, to some one place, the most private you can find or make, in the room you have in common. It matters not so much to be out of sight of men, as to be in sight of God; for you to be seen by Him, and for you to see Him by faith. Remember what you owe to Him, and give thanks. Call to mind how you have grieved Him, and confess. Consider what you want of Him; forgiveness of sin, grace unto holiness, and salvation of the soul through Christ. Consider and ask in prayer, believing; and through Christ "ye shall receive." Matt. 21. 22. Confess both your own sins, and the sinfulness of your own nature. Own yourself to be unfit to enter into God's presence. Think over with shame and sorrow before Him your worldly ways, your proud and selfish thoughts, your wanton words and looks and deeds; your perverse temper, your vain amusements, your idle neglect of his holy will. Pray that He be not extreme to mark what is done amiss. Pray that for his dear Son's sake He would forgive your sinfulness, and give you of his grace. Pray that He may make you to live in love, to die in hope, to rest in peace, and to rise in glory. And above all, each time of praying, each morning the first thing, and each night the last, give thanks to God for his great goodness in the redemption of the world through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Christ cleanseth a leper.

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

40 ¹ And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will;

be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

45 ² But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

¹ Matt. 8. 2.

² Luke 5. 15.

§ 116. *How we ought to publish God's goodness to ourselves.*

In the healing of the leper it should be observed that the disease he laboured under was at once most loathsome and most hopeless of cure. A prophet, as we read in the Old Testament, 2 Kings 5. 27, might inflict it by way of punishment, but Christ, and they only, to whom He gave the power, by a touch could heal it. The many laws of Moses relating to this complaint, to its signs, its offensiveness, and to the necessity of avoiding all contact with the diseased, all seem to point it out as a fit type of that deep disease in the soul of man, the leprosy of sin. This, too, it was reserved for Christ to heal. He and He only by his word can make us clean.

From the conduct of this leper, let us learn what course it is our wisdom to pursue for this end. He came to Christ, beseeching Him, and kneeling down, and saying unto Him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Thus, too, must we come to Christ, with prayer "beseeching him," with humility "kneeling down," and with faith professing without doubt "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The kneeling is for the body, as the humility is for the mind. This outward posture is important as an expression of the inward disposition. It signifies that we bow down our souls before God; and not signifies only, but helps us to do so. It helps us, by its being a posture used only for the purpose of prayer, and thus reminding us when we kneel, that we are then to pray. It helps us, as giving us some sense of inconvenience, and thus reminding us, when we pray, that we are in need of assistance. It helps us, as being what we never do to each other, what we never do to our brother man, and thus reminding us, when we do it, that we are in the presence of Almighty God. Take care then, that when you pray, you kneel. Take care that when you kneel, you pray devoutly. Neither in private prayer, nor in family devotion, nor in public worship, indulge the body in that ease of posture which is injurious to the exertion of the soul. Such pain or weariness as distracts the attention would defeat the very end of all devotion; and each man's own strength and health must be in this matter the measure of his bodily homage. But let this be the purpose and the aim of all, that according to the measure of your health and strength, you each kneel so as to feel that you are kneeling, so as to be sensible of inconvenience, so as to express humiliation.

And whilst the body kneels, let us be sure that the thoughts are humble; let us be sure that the heart is faithful. Let us be sure that we both feel how little we can help ourselves, and how greatly God is able, and willing also, to help us. Readily is He moved with compassion for the manifold infirmities of his creatures, when they are laid before Him in prayer. Constantly doth He say to every one of us, if only we apply in humility and faith, "I will; be thou clean." It is his will that we be cleansed from offence, saved from death and from condemnation. It is his will that we be clean. Oh, let not us purpose to defile ourselves with sin!

Nor when most we may suppose that we have tasted of this mercy should we forget the injunction here given to the leper, or publish unadvisedly, proudly, or familiarly, our great and wondrous cure. Our own private experience of God's goodness, in deliverance from sin to the power of holiness, our being cleansed from evil thoughts, and enabled to mind chiefly things in heaven; these are matters, of which in proportion as we feel them deeply, we should be the less inclined to talk lightly. It is in our conduct, and not in our professions, it is in the tenour of all we say and do, that our blessed change is to be made manifest. It is by a holy life, as well as by an edifying conversation that we should make our light shine before men. It is when they see our good works, as well as hear our good words, that they will glorify our Father which is in heaven. See Matth. 5. 16.

May our hearts be touched by the love of Christ! May our souls be made clean through his most precious blood! May our sins, forgiven for his merits' sake and healed by his grace, no longer make us hurtful to our brethren, nor hateful in the sight of Him, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil." Habak. 1. 3.

Christ healeth one sick of the palsy.

1 ¹ And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting here, and reasoning in their hearts,

¹ Matt. 9. 1.

7 Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? ² who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk*?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.*

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

² Job 14. 4. Is. 43. 25.

§ 117. *That we should desire rather spiritual than earthly blessings.*

One of the most obvious things noted in this miracle, as already related by St. Matthew, 8. 1—4, was the close connexion between sin and suffering. From this account of St. Mark we may do well to draw the lesson of their comparative importance, to consider how much more deeply to be deplored are the ailments of the soul, than those of the body. Not so, it seems, thought they who brought unto our Lord the sick of the palsy. For they scrupled not, whilst He was preaching the word to a crowd so great that the doorway was impassable, they scrupled not to interrupt his discourse by letting down this sick man on his bed through the roof. Jesus, who in all his words and works would teach us to think no evil, treated this their eagerness as an argument of their faith, so far as they had means to believe. Let us learn, however deeply we may be otherwise engaged, when applied to for assistance or advice, let us endeavour to see, in the importunity of those who apply, not rudeness, but zeal; not a subject of vexation or rebuke, but a motive to our kind and courteous attention.

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” He will not be diverted from his spiritual teaching. He so complies with the application for help to the body, as to point to the far greater importance of health in the soul. He desists from preaching the word to the multitude, only that He may preach it to the sick of the palsy, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” He first heals the inner, then the outward man. Both things were to Him alike easy. But He would have us know that both are not alike important. And that for which we press most eagerly He withholds, till He has enforced the preeminence of the other. Would the bearers of that couch have so waited at the door, so climbed on the roof, broken up so eagerly the covering of the chamber, and so boldly have let down at the feet of Jesus their helpless burden, had the object of their prayer been, not the healing of his palsy, but the forgiveness of his sins? We fear that they would not; if, at least, we may judge from our own too eager longing for this world’s health, this world’s blessings, from our own too cold indifference to those which Christ offers in the world to come. Well it is, if for a time He withhold what first we ask, and so teach us to ask first, for what most we need. Power He had on earth to forgive sins. Power He hath in heaven, where now He sitteth on the right hand of God. See Heb. 10. 12. Power He hath, and will have, in that day when He shall come in the glory of the Father to judge the quick and dead. See 1 Pet. 4. 5. This power let us beseech Him to exert for the healing of the soul. And as for the infirmities of the body, any sufferings or sorrows which in this mortal life our fallen frame is heir to, let us feel them to be light in the comparison, nay helpful, if we rightly use them, to our eternal health.

This health, which consists in the forgiveness of sin and in the grace of holiness, this health of the spirit within, ought to be, we here learn, the first object of our anxiety, as well in behalf of others as for ourselves. Let us then for our fellow creatures labour ever to do good after this sort. Let us pray, and work, and give, with a view to instruct the ignorant, and to reclaim the wicked, and so bring our brethren unto Christ, if by any means their sins may be forgiven them. And for ourselves, let us take shame to think how deep has been our affliction under the loss of health perhaps, or wealth, or friends, compared with the dull apprehension we feel of the misery of our lost estate, of the frailty of our souls, and of the extent of their iniquity in the sight of God. These things let us henceforth try to feel more deeply, that we may before Him more heartily deplore them. And neglecting in the comparison the very chiefest of this world’s goods, let us aim, above all things, to obtain from Christ this gracious sentence, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Hear, Lord, our prayers for those we love! Hear, Lord, their prayers for us! Forgive, we pray Thee, them their sin! Forgive us, we pray Thee, ours!

Christ calleth Levi; eateth with publicans and sinners.

13 And he went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14 ¹ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting ^{||} at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

18 ² And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of [†] new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

¹ Matt. 9. 9.

^{||} Or, at the place where the custom was received.

² Matt. 9. 14. Luke 5. 33.

[†] Or, raw, or, unwrought.

§ 118 *The limit of Christian festivity.*

Levi the son of Alphaeus is the same with Matthew the writer of the first Gospel. He appears to have been the last called of the twelve apostles. Jesus passing by near the sea side saw him sitting at the receipt of custom. That is to say, he was engaged in the work of his calling, as a publican, or receiver of the public customs. This was a business most disgraceful in the estimation of the Jews, who objected to paying tribute, as they were now forced to do, to the Roman government. And besides, owing to the plan on which all taxes used then to be collected, it was a business which led commonly to the practice of extortion and fraud. (See Lect. 29.) Yet when one only was wanting to fill the number of the apostles, it was from "the receipt of custom" that Matthew was called. So little in the matter of our Christian calling, so little signifies our worldly business or quality, in comparison with our inward disposition. To the poor no less than to the rich, to the despised no less than to them that are in honour, to all under the dispensation of the Gospel, is it given, if the fault be not their own, to become as apostles of Christ, to shew forth, in their respective stations, the power of his Gospel, and holiness of heart.

Jesus, we read, refused not to sit at meat in the house of his apostle Matthew, and in the company of many who were in the same condition of life. At this act of condescension the Pharisees were inclined to take offence. "They said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" The answer, and the example also of our Lord, serve to shew us how much we should mistake our duty, if we were to abstain from all intercourse of society with such as we might suppose to be greater sinners than ourselves. We should choose indeed in preference the company of the good. And some risk of evil we cannot fail to run from communication with those who have less regard for God. This risk, however, we are to guard against by prayer and watchfulness; not to avoid it by exclusive retirement from the world. Therein it is our duty, at once to exercise our own faith, and hope, and charity; and to promote, as much as in us lies, among all with whom we come in contact, the growth of Christian grace. However forward be our progress, we may still continue ourselves to be in the number of publicans and sinners. Nor are there any so far gone in iniquity, but that we are bound herein to treat them with brotherly love. According to the degree of our connexion with them, by neighbourhood or birth, service or mastership, membership of the same family, household, or church, we must eat and drink with them, deal or confer; and so seek by our conversation to win them unto Christ, rather than by their rejection to justify ourselves.

Here then we have a rule for our associating with others. As in the answer which follows, to the disciples of John, and of the Pharisees, we find corresponding directions applicable to our Christian duty, in the use of meats and drinks. These, and such other enjoyments as God has in his goodness given unto man, we are allowed in some cases to partake of, as well as in some instances exhorted to refuse. "As long as the bridegroom is with them," the children of the bridechamber "cannot fast." The new spirit of the Christian dispensation was no more fit to be confined by the severe system of the elder covenant, than new cloth is to be sewn on an old garment, or new wine to be put into old bottles. There is a time for all things. The Gospel does not enjoin unmitigated austerity of life. Seriousness and self-denial are to be varied with cheerfulness, and with the thankful receiving of "every creature of God." 1 Tim. 4. 4. Let us then endeavour, through God's grace, to discharge both duties, to unite in ourselves both tempers. Let us continually fast, by never exceeding the bounds of temperance and sobriety of mind. Let us feast continually, by thankfully enjoying all God's good gifts, as well those of his providence, as those of his grace.

Christ teacheth that the sabbath was made for man.

23 ¹ And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

¹ Matt. 12. 1.

§ 119. *How we may best profit by the Christian sabbath.*

The disciples on the sabbath day are contented to satisfy their hunger with corn gathered as they walked through the fields. So true it is, that a man may be in want of bread, and be not any the less near to Christ; so true, that those whom God most loves He visits often with poverty, hunger, or distress. The Pharisees, who ought to have felt compassion for the disciples in their need, were inclined rather to accuse them of profaning the day of rest. Our Lord, in his reply, first justifies his disciples, and then lays down the true principle of observing the sabbath under the Christian dispensation. In order to justify his disciples to the Pharisees, He argues from their own Scriptures, and from the example of David, that there were cases of necessity in which the letter of the Law could not be followed. He shews also how they who were commissioned from on high, as was David, and as He was Himself, might in such cases dispense with the ordinances of God, whether in such a matter as the shew-bread, or in any other. Thus the disciples had done no more than the Pharisees must own to be allowable. Thus does Christ still justify his faithful servants; pleading for them both his own merits, and the gracious promise of his word, against that evil accuser of the brethren who accuseth them before God day and night. See Rev. 12. 10.

And further He declares, that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Whence it would follow that the man himself, his health or life, ought not to be sacrificed to the observation of a law, which was ordained for the relief both of body and soul. And whence it would follow, in the second place, that "the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." For He is the Lord of all that has been ordained for the good of man, Himself the ordainer of it; the Son, not of man only, but of God; the Son, by whom the worlds were made. See Heb. 1. 2. To commemorate that work of creation, to remind man, throughout all generations, of his high original at the hand of God, to refresh his body, and to prepare his weary soul for the rest of heaven; for these ends was this portion of time set apart from the beginning, the hallowing of this day enjoined on all mankind, the command renewed in the law of Moses, with a solemn admonition to remember it, and fulfilled or enforced in a more spiritual application, by the Gospel to the disciples of Christ.

This then is the gracious reason assigned by our Lord for our observing it, "the sabbath was made for man." This the rule by which we are to observe it, "the sabbath was made for man." For our good and not for our harm; for our rest and help unto holiness; not for our privation in the comforts of this life, but for the improvement of our condition in those good things which belong to the life that is to come. The sabbath was made for man; for man's good. Let not its return become, by too strict a rule, a snare to the consciences of mankind. The sabbath was made for man; for man's good. Never let us, by its profanation or neglect, lose the great advantages, which God doth in Christ on this day offer.

Each sabbath that returns, let us remember ere the day begins, that it was made for our good. Let us ask ourselves severally, each evening, as each sabbath ends, what good have I derived from its observance? Have I rejoiced in the opportunity afforded me to suspend the employments of this present world, and to fix my thoughts without let or hindrance on the joys of the world to come? Have I partaken of rest without idleness, and taken, as our blessed Lord allowed, the necessities of life, without indulging in luxurious excess? Have I resorted with zeal to public worship, there prayed with earnestness, and listened to the word there preached with a single view to the edification of my soul? Have I examined thoroughly my conduct during the week past, noted what therein I did amiss, confessed and repented whereinsoever I am aware that I laboured or spake, received or spent, without an eye to God's glory, and to the good of man? And am I now at peace with God? Have I repented with a "repentance to salvation not to be repented of?" 2 Cor. 7. 10. Have I stirred up, by meditating on the word of God, my faith in the merits of his Son, my trust in the promise of his forgiveness through Christ, my hope in the heaven He hath revealed?

God grant, that each time his hallowed day returns, we may find that He hath made it for our good! God grant that in this, and in all his ordinances, we may experience the excellency of his love! God teach us, to the comfort of our souls, that in all the dispensation of the Gospel, He doth not more make us work for his glory, than make all things work together for our good! See Rom. 8. 28.

Christ healeth the withered hand.

1 And ¹he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the || hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa,

8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they † pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

¹ Matt. 12. 9.

|| Or, blindness.

† Or, rushed.

§ 120. *How we are to disarm the enmity of the world.*

Whosoever, after the example of our Saviour, designs and endeavours to do good, should be prepared to meet with many who will watch that they may accuse him. So ready are men to find fault with any measure of excellence, however small, which exceeds what they purpose themselves to practise! Whether it be that for some Christian end we do on the sabbath day the works of necessity or love, whether we devote, more than they, our time to heaven on other days of the week; in some such way, our conduct will be thought to condemn all who shew not the like zeal, somewhat the world will be sure to censure in those who are not thoroughly conformed to its ways. Now it is not in our power, like our Saviour, to confute these accusations by a miracle. We cannot with like fulness of authority proclaim to the lame, "Stretch forth thine hand." We cannot thus heal them that are plagued with sickness, or compel the unclean spirits to depart at the name of Christ. But from his conduct, as here related, we may learn for our direction the following important rules.

First, that we should justify our zeal, by a sober appeal to the right reason of our fellow creatures. "Is it lawful to do good?" Is it, we may ask them, or is it not, agreeable to your own convictions, that if we do indeed believe in God, we should do all we can to serve Him; that if we do indeed hope for heaven, we should take all the pains we can to go there? Can any one be really injured, can any law be broken, any harm be inflicted by our activity, if we are active in doing good? If not, why should you find fault with those, who exercise in such matters more zeal, devote to them more thought, more time, more wealth than yourselves? We do not thus in order to condemn others, but in order to save from condemnation ourselves. Our aim is to do the will of our Saviour Christ. And so far are we herein from exulting over you, that we have learnt from his word, even of your greater negligence to think no evil, even in your indifference to these duties, yet to hope for you all things. See 1 Cor. 13. 5, 7.

Secondly, we learn hence, that if ever anger is allowable, if ever we can be angry and sin not, see Eph. 4. 26, it is when we are angry against sin, and when our anger against sin is tempered with a lively concern for the sinner. Our Lord had no sooner looked round in anger on his enemies, than He proceeded to work a miracle for their conversion. So must we also in our utmost indignation at the daring iniquity, or unjust censure of mankind, so must we also be devising always the most effectual means, to soften their enmity and improve their hearts. Nor shall we find any means so serviceable, nor so near perhaps in their judgment to a miracle, as for us to requite their ill treatment with unfeigned affection, and to give proof of our affection in words of gentleness, and works of kindness. "A soft answer," we know, Prov. 15. 1, "turneth away wrath." Much more does a kind action disarm displeasure; and the warmth of charity make to melt the heart that is most hardened in opposition and ill will. See Rom. 12. 20.

Thirdly, if our enemies proceed, notwithstanding, from censure to persecution; we learn hence how it is our duty to withdraw ourselves in time from the threatened evil. "But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples." And afterwards for the like reason He charged the unclean spirits that "they should not make him known." Let us, like Him, endeavour to prove, that in the work of doing good, it is God's glory we have at heart, and not our own. Let us shew forth in what we do, and in our manner of doing, not the love of ourselves, but the love of God, and of our neighbour. Jealousy will thus be best appeased when we make no pretence to being superior. And censure will be most effectually silenced, when we aim not to condemn, but to convert our neighbour. And having taken all means of peace to avoid the persecution of the ungodly, we shall have the comfort of reflecting, whether we are subject to it or not, that herein the same mind is in us, "which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. 2. 5.

Christ ordaineth his twelve apostles.

13 ¹ And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

16 And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went || into an house.

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

21 And when his † friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

¹ Matt. 10. 1.

|| Or, home.

† Or, kinsmen.

§ 121. *How we ought to attend the ministry of the word.*

We here read of the first ordination or appointment of ministers by our Lord. We shall do well therefore to observe its object and the manner in which it was done. Its object was that the apostles should be with Christ, and that "he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." By their being with Him, they were to learn his doctrine, to remember his sayings, and to be able to bear true witness to the chief events of his life, his death, and his resurrection. By their miraculous powers of healing, they were to prove to others the truth of what they spake, and to enforce, as by divine authority, the duties they preached. The manner of their appointment was, that Christ went up into a mountain, and called unto Him "whom he would. And he ordained twelve." Of which twelve it is remarkable that they afterwards forsook Him; and that amongst them were both Peter who denied Him, and Judas Iscariot "which also betrayed him." This ordaining then did not insure that they would of necessity be in all instances faithful and obedient. Nor did it hinder there being one in the number for whom it had been good "if he had not been born." Matt. 26. 24. It gave them the privilege to be with Christ. It gave them authority to preach his word. And yet it left them liable to transgress as before; at liberty, such is the liberty of sin, to do dishonour to his doctrines, and despite to his grace.

Hence we learn, that an ordination or outward appointment is necessary for the due authority of Christian ministers. For as these were by Christ themselves appointed, so did they appoint others also after them; and that, as there is every reason to believe in fulfilment of his own directions. Nor can any emergency now justify men in taking this office upon themselves; any more than the lack of labourers in the vineyard, would have induced these twelve to go forth and preach, before they had the sanction of their Lord. And further we learn, that as the ministers of Christ derive, when duly ordained, their authority from Him; they are entitled to the respect of the flock, not by virtue of any zeal or holiness of their own, but by reason of their office, and of its divine appointment. Judas, we see, had the same mission as the rest, preached the same word, wrought the like miracles, and ministered, for aught we read to the contrary, with the like success. Wherein we may well admire the wisdom of that Providence, which, having to work by means of beings so frail as men, has made the uses of their ministration, in great measure, independent of frailty in the ministers themselves. The treasure, is "in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. 4. 7; but the vessels are to be had in honour for the treasure's sake, and for his sake who hath committed it to their care.

Nor should we here fail to observe, that the great object of those who are thus appointed is, that, like the apostles, they should both be with Christ, and go forth and preach in his name. With Him they should be frequent in meditation and in prayer, they should be intent on doing the will of their Father which is in heaven. They should conform to his example, their thoughts, their desires, their employments; and so go forth continually to enforce on others the gracious truths of his Gospel. Whilst those who hear the word should imitate in their attentive zeal, the anxiety of that multitude, who so waited on the preaching of Christ and his apostles, that "they could not so much as eat bread." The world indeed, and they even whom the world calls our friends, would be ready in such case to say of us, as of Christ, "He is beside himself." But with St. Paul we might most truly reply, "I am not mad, most noble Festus." Acts 26. 25. With him we might prefer in sober earnest the truth of God's word to the applause of men. And whensoever both cannot at once be enjoyed, whensoever our Christian improvement is incompatible with our worldly interest, the madness on our part would be for us not to neglect even the support of the body, for "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." John 6. 27.

Grant, Lord, to thy ministers, that they may feed thy sheep! Grant, Lord, to thy people, that they may reverence thy word, and all those whom thou hast ordained to teach it! Incline us "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," 1 Thess. 5. 13, for that work which thou hast given them to do, and which is, in their hands, not theirs, but thine.

Christ speaketh of blasphemy, declareth who are his near relatives.

22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, ¹ He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23 And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

28 ² Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

¹ Matt. 9. 34.

² Matt. 12. 31.

³ Matt. 12. 46.

§ 122. *That we should draw near to Christ by zeal in his service.*

That men were really possessed by devils, and that Christ did really cast them out, was neither denied nor questioned by these scribes who came down from Jerusalem, for the very purpose, as it should seem, of finding fault with our Lord. That which they plainly saw, they could not at the same time gainsay. They took therefore the only remaining method of disparaging these miracles; they ascribed them to the evil influence of Satan. "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." Our Lord first points out the absurdity of supposing that Satan would "cast out Satan." He argues that no house could prosper by being divided against itself; and that no one can spoil the possessions of an enemy except by first binding him and restraining his power. Then, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit," He adds the fearful denunciation of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This offence therefore consisted in those very words, "He hath an unclean spirit." It was the ascribing to Satan those miracles which they could not deny to be supernatural, but would not attribute to the Holy Spirit of God. The great aggravation of the sinfulness of these words was the determined purpose of unbelief which animated those who uttered them. They saw, with their own eyes, the casting out of the devils. They might have known, with the least consideration, that only by the Spirit of God could this be done. To say then that it was done by Beelzebub was to blaspheme against God the Holy Ghost, and was enough to prove themselves unworthy, if not incapable, of any further conviction. For no means can be conceived by man, and certainly none have been adopted by God, so powerful for convincing the human mind, as that which we call a miracle. That sickness should cease, and health return, at a word or at a touch; that evil spirits, after manifest possession, should be utterly and triumphantly cast out, these are things which must prove to all beholders that "this is the finger of God." Exod. 8. 19. And they who perversely refuse such proof of God's agency, can have no prospect of being converted by any other means to that faith and repentance of heart, without which there is no hope of forgiveness.

Such seems to have been the great aggravation of this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. So that no man can, strictly speaking, be guilty of it, now that miracles are no longer to be seen. But though we see them not, yet are we justly taught to acknowledge, "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." (Litany.) Near then to the enormity of this sin do all they approach, who, either in words or writings, ascribe to any other than divine agency the miracles of Christ and of his apostles. Most carefully, therefore, should we abstain from countenancing, in the slightest degree, any such conversation, or from handling and encouraging any such books as tend to throw discredit on the Gospel of God.


Better it were, like the mother and brethren of Jesus, to stand without, merely desiring to see Him, better to have been born in heathen lands where they neither see nor hear of Christ, than either to see or hear of his works, without humbly believing in his word. Not that by any waiting, expecting, or sending, not that by any application of others only, we can obtain the blessings of faith, or enjoy the privileges of true kindred with our Lord. No, it is by doing the will of God, by so hearing as to believe, by so believing as to practise, by so seeking as to go to Him, rather than wait for Him to come to us, it is by zeal and obedience such as this, that we might not only stand guiltless of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, but be counted also for his mother and brethren by Himself. They stood without; let us press within. They called from afar; let us fall down as at his knees. They sought Him perhaps on some business of trifling moment. Let us apply for his grace unto the saving of our souls. Then, instead of the rebuke they met with, we shall receive the praise He promised. Brothers and sisters shall we be counted unto Himself; joint heirs with Him in eternal glory.

The parable of the sower.

1 And¹ he began again to teach by the sea side : and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea ; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3 Hearken ; Behold, there went out a sower to sow :

4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it .

5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not

much earth ; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth :

6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched ; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased ; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹ Mat. 13. 1.

§ 123. *A Christian view of our natural advantages.*

The sower here spoken of is our Lord Himself. The seed is the word of his Gospel. It is that word, as set forth in the Scriptures, or as it is preached faithfully from the sacred volume by his appointed ministers. Strange it is to think how day by day these glad tidings of salvation are proclaimed, and yet so many of the hearers remain unmoved, unconverted to a Christian life ! The parable before us assigns the true reason of this sad failure of the heavenly seed. It is part only of the ground that is good. It is part, and that only as one part in four, only as a small part of the ground that is good. Few only of those, which are thus called, are in the end found fit to be chosen. Few only of those who thus hear the word, are fit to bring forth fruit unto perfection.

Not that we may suppose any ground of itself to be good. God it is who both soweth, and giveth also the increase. He it is who by his grace maketh the ground capable of yielding true holiness, and peace, and joy. Only there is some ground which answers to his care ; and there is other, which yields no return. And this parable, therefore, plainly shews us that the fault, when the seed fails, is not in the seed, but in the ground ; not in the word preached, but in them that hear. The Author of salvation has appointed in his wisdom all fitting means for the edification of mankind. In his mercy He has applied to our hearts every motive they are capable of feeling, for our effectual turning unto Himself. Yet in some of us, as in a highway, the seed comes not up at all. In some, as in stony ground, it comes up, only at once to wither. In some, as among thorns, though it come up and grow, yet doth it yield no fruit. And only in the “good ground,” only in what our Lord is pleased graciously to call “an honest and good heart,” Luke 8. 15, doth it bring forth fruit unto perfection. The defect then is in the heart of the hearer. It is that corruption and perversity of will which we naturally inherit from fallen Adam ; but which it is utterly our own fault if we follow, or encourage in ourselves. For it is clear from this parable that the Sower does his part faithfully, bountifully to all, to all alike ; that He sows as if all might bring forth fruit. Nay, we doubt not that, under the influence of his grace, many, else most reluctant to do good, are made to bear some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

And this should check our too fond conceit of such natural advantages as each man is apt to reckon on in himself, to the disparagement of his neighbour's capacity. It is not only in respect to spiritual attainments that men are tempted to say in their hearts to God, “I thank thee that I am not as other men are.” Luke 18. 11. This reflection is no less common in regard to natural faculties, in regard to sense, or memory, or judgment, or ingenuity ; in regard to temper of mind, or even strength of body. These things make us more or less able to do God good service ; more or less capable of eminent usefulness to each other. These and other such like faculties, in which we either abound or are wanting, make us more or less resemble the different kinds of ground which are set forth in the parable before us. And so far we are apt each of us to esteem ourselves amongst the best, that there is perhaps no one who would be willing, on taking all things into account, to change his own head and heart for another's. Let us consider then of these advantages we so highly esteem, first, that they are the gift of God for our probation. Let us put to ourselves, if we are tempted to be proud of them, the question which St. Paul asks in another matter : “Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?” 1 Cor. 4. 7. Secondly, let us reflect that those to whom we seem in one thing superior, are probably in some other point as much superior to us ; are certainly, for aught that we can know to the contrary, as much objects of God's tender care as we are ourselves. And, thirdly, let us ever bear in mind how also we have to enter into a state where the distinctions which here prevail are unknown, where it shall be “as with the people so with the priest, as with the servant so with his master ;” Isai. 24. 2 ; where “whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away ;” 1 Cor. 13. 8 ; and they only shall be counted wise or strong, who have been found to be “wise unto salvation ;” 2 Tim. 3. 15 ; “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” Eph. 6. 10.

Christ expoundeth the parable of the sower.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables:

12 ¹ That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.

13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

14 The sower soweth the word.

15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time; afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18 And these are they which are sown among thorns: such as hear the word,

19 And the cares of this world, ² and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20 And these are they which are sown on good ground: such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

¹ Matt. 13. 14.

² 1 Tim. 6. 17.

§ 124. *The responsibility of our Christian privileges.*

As there are differences in our natural faculties and dispositions, so are there also in the degrees of light which we enjoy, in our opportunities of knowledge, and of grace. Unto us, we may say thankfully of ourselves, unto us, as opposed to many other countries, to many other families, to many other persons, unto us "it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." In what age or nation could we conceive ourselves to have been born, in what station of life to be placed, of what church to be members, where more than in our own we may know, and, if it be not our own fault, may do also God's will? How great is the responsibility we thus incur! How precious the trust committed to us! How fearful the account we have to render unto Him who hath made known to us the parables of his Gospel, the offer of his grace, the hope of his inheritance in heaven!

And whilst we say this thankfully towards God, let us see that we say it also humbly of ourselves, and charitably also towards "them that are without," who are destitute of these manifold advantages. For here again we should call to mind who it is that maketh us to differ from others. See 1 Cor. 4. 7. To us it is given to know the mystery of the Gospel; but it is a mystery which to many is still hid. Christianity is to the heathen, and the true Christian life is to many a one called Christian, a parable which they cannot understand. They have sight to see, and yet perceive not. If heathens, they might know from the things they see, that truth of God which is invisible. See Rom. 1. 20. They might know it, if Christians, from the word of God. If they know it not yet, let us hope that they may know it soon. Let us consider how to us who know it now, who are now well acquainted with the will of the Father, and the way of access through the Son; let us consider how to us, if we do not that will, if we walk not in that way by the Spirit, to us it is the greater sin.

Great as are our privileges, we are not therefore the more safe. Nor have we any of us the more reason to presume. None there are but are exposed to the wiles of Satan, ever going about to take the word out of their hearts. None but are liable to "affliction or persecution" "for the word's sake;" to the discouragements of ill example, ill conversation, or evil communication; as hindering their progress in true piety. None but run risk of being engrossed by the "cares of this world," seduced by "the deceitfulness of riches," or led captive by "the lusts of other things entering in." Some of us are more exposed to one kind of temptation, and some to another. But in any case, if only we hear the word of the Gospel, there is sown in us the seed of life. Whether it be as on the way side, or as on stony ground, or as among thorns, the fault is ours; and on us, under such circumstances, that seed is sown in vain. Whilst they who, under like conditions, hear the same word and keep it, are for that very reason the good ground, because that through grace they keep it.

Having then this parable here explained to us by our Lord Himself, let us take heed that we apply it to the improvement of our hearts. Let us endeavour that from this hour his seed may never in us be sown in vain, his word never heard without amendment of life. For the more clearly it is given to us to know these mysteries of the Gospel dispensation, the more deeply must we answer for it if we neglect them. If thus seeing, so as to behold the truth, we perceive not, that is, behold not with faith; if thus hearing, so as to be aware of our duty, we hear not, that is, hear not so as to obey; so much the more surely will it be our sentence, for our punishment, that we shall not be converted, nor have our sins forgiven us.

God grant that the word sown in our hearts may spring up in us unto everlasting life! God make us, according to our ability, to bring forth fruit in due season! God teach us at once to make allowances for our brethren, and to distrust ourselves; at once to be thankful for the privileges we have received, and yet ashamed to think how little we have improved them!

The parables of the candle, the seed, and the mustard tree.

21 ¹ And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a || bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22 ² For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23 If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.

24 And he saith unto them, Take heed what ye hear: ³ with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25 ⁴ For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first

the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is [†] brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

30 And he said, ⁵ Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31 *It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:*

32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

33 ⁶ And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear *it*.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

¹ Matt. 5. 15.

⁴ Matt. 13. 12.

|| The word in the original signifieth a less measure, as Matt. 5. 15.

[†] Or, *ripen*.

⁵ Matt. 13. 31.

² Matt. 10. 26.

⁶ Matt. 13. 34.

³ Matt. 7. 2.

§ 125. *The gentle growth and sovereign power of divine grace.*

At the end of the parable of the sower, we are reminded of the use of parables, to make clear the truth, and to enforce it more effectually on our attention. As the candle, which for a time may be concealed, is intended rather to be set on a candlestick; so whatsoever is in Scripture hidden, whether in parable or prophecy, or in any other method, is covered only for some present good, and shall in the end be of a certainty made manifest. By reason of man's weak apprehension, of his incapacity to receive at once all that is good for him to know, many things are at first kept secret. Many things relating to the ways of God are withheld from one generation, and revealed to another, or to the very same persons are for a time only obscure, and afterwards the bright source of hope and joy. All this is so ordered only for our good, only that hereafter, either in this world or in the next, we may know God better, and love Him more.

Let us then, as our Saviour bids us, take heed how we hear. Let us consider that we have to answer for what measure of attention we pay to his blessed word. Let us study with diligence and soberness, even the most difficult of his sayings; knowing that his grace will be imparted, not according to the measure of our ability, but according to the use we conscientiously endeavour to make of it. For they who have, and use knowledge, will be sure to have the more bestowed on them. Whilst they who use not for the best what they already have, must expect to have it for their sin taken from them.

In the two parables which follow, we may learn by what gentle means and to what a wide extent the Gospel of grace is to be spread abroad, both over the world in general, and also in the heart of each single Christian. First, of the growth of Christian faith amongst the human race, we observe that it was sown by its divine Founder, in the brief ministry of scarce three whole years. During this period, and for some short space afterwards, the power of the Almighty was exerted in miracles to aid its establishment. Thenceforward it has been left, as far as man can discern, to grow as of itself. It has sprung up, like the corn, without any help that we can see. And in its growth it has already, like the mustard tree, from a small seed become greater than all herbs. From the congregation of one hundred and twenty, which we read of in the Acts, 1. 15, it has compassed the wide extent of many nations, and these the most powerful and enlightened of mankind.

But, secondly, it is in our own hearts, and in the effects there produced by the Gospel of Christ, that these parables should be most amply realized. There it is that, by the mercy of God, the gifts of grace have been bountifully sown. Cast they have been, as seed into the ground; not violently, forcibly planted, as some reckon, at full growth; but gently and gradually springing up; “first the blade, then the ear.” First conviction of sin may have been felt, and from conviction has come sorrow, from sorrow repentance, with repentance faith, and with faith that holiness of life, which is, as the full corn in the ear, ripe for the harvest of eternity. Thus by no sudden irresistible conversion, but by a growth, which, whether slow or rapid, is healthy, seasonable, and sound, thus should the very least of seeds, the preaching of the lowly Jesus, grow up to predominate in our hearts, over every other principle of action. The cross may seem at first a stumblingblock, at first we may esteem perhaps of small account the sufferings of Him who died thereon. But in proportion as we perceive that He bare our sins, and was wounded for our transgressions, then doth He become to us the one thing needful, and his kingdom as that greatest of all plants, under the shadow of whose branches we most desire to lodge. This world, how small it seems in the comparison, its cares how trifling, its pleasures how vain! Ourselves how vile! and He how precious! We helpless; and He all our strength! We lost; and He all our salvation! Happy are we when thus we see Him as He is; and find Him to be to us the tree of life; and eat; and live for ever!

Christ stilleth the raging of the sea.

35 ¹ And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep

on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

¹ Matt. 8. 23.

§ 126. *That the terrors of the Lord are revealed for our good.*

This miracle is the more striking by reason of the great power of winds and waves, which we are accustomed to consider amongst the most violent things in nature, and which were here rebuked and made calm. Whatever is done plainly beyond the course of nature is well suited to convince us that God is interfering. And the greater is the power interfered with, the more forcible is the evidence of God manifesting Himself. If then we would feel the whole force of the evidence here afforded, we should conceive ourselves in the situation of these apostles, overtaken during the darkness of the night by a sudden and violent storm; the waves all the while beating into the ship, "so that it was now full." Now in such an emergency what hope has a creature so weak as man? No power that he knows of on earth can be relied on to save him from instant death. A believer in Christ will trust, under the most fearful circumstances, that Providence ordereth all things for the best. But he will scarce expect to have allotted to him the continuance of life; or, if the means of escape should occur, he has no notion that the winds will on a sudden cease, or the waves at a word be still. On the contrary, he is well assured that both will take a long time to grow calm; and that if he should at length survive, it must be after the perils of wreck upon the shore, or after being tossed about at many risks in the shattered vessel. What then would be the force of our convictions, if in the midst of such an emergency as this, we were to see one in the form of a man arise, and rebuke the wind and the sea, saying, "Peace, be still?" What, I say, if we should see the wind and the sea obey Him? We could not doubt that this was done by the authority of One greater than man, even by the arm of God Himself. We could not refuse to receive what was taught by One who did this mighty work, as the revelation of the will of God. This then is the first lesson we should learn from so great a work; to adore the great Being through whose power it was done; to receive with faith that revelation of his which it was plainly wrought to sanction.

And, secondly, we may hence learn of the most formidable things this world exhibits, that there is nothing here so much to be feared as God who made them. The apostles, who had been frightened at the violence of the storm, were yet more impressed with awe at the suddenness of the calm. "They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Awful then as are the commotions of the angry elements, frightful as are the winds and waves, and lightnings and thunderings of the storm, let us learn to fear rather that boundless Power which could in a moment make them still. He it is, even God, who made all things, He who permits them thus to swell and rage together, He who controls for the good of his creatures their disturbance or their rest, their war or peace. Never then let us suppose He cares not "that we perish." Never let us doubt that even the terrors of the Lord are set forth out of his love for our souls, and out of his fatherly concern for safety.

Here we see, how in the storm of wind and waves, He contrived that by their sudden calming they should prove Jesus to be the Christ, and his word the will of God. Whenever then we witness the like war of elements, let us be reminded of this miracle, and of Him who said effectually, "Peace, be still." Let these his words bring to our hearts, if not to things around us, a cheerful calm. Let them make us firm and faithful under all the terrors this world can present. And when we read even of that lake "which burneth with fire," Rev. 21. 8, let us remember, that from that fire the same Power can protect us, and the same voice confirm the safety of the soul. He careth that we perish not. He made, He hath redeemed all. And all would He make holy by his grace, and seal as his saints from the wrath to come. Even that wrath He hath revealed only for our good; only that we might the more earnestly endeavour to escape it, only that through fear we might learn to love, and to love the more as we have from more been saved, through Christ our Lord.

Christ casteth out the legion of devils.

1 And ¹ they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the moun-

tains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him;

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee ~~by~~ God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What *is* thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

¹ Matt. 8. 28.

§ 127. *That we live in a world of spirits.*

From St. Matthew we learn that there were two men thus possessed, though St. Mark and St. Luke mention only one of them. The dwelling of this poor man among the tombs, his violence towards himself, his crying day and night, all these represent to us the sad condition of any one who is subject to the possession of Satan. Can we then in any sense, in any degree, be thus possessed? Certain it is from Scripture that there are evil spirits who lie in wait for our souls; that they have power, in some manner unknown to us, to tempt us into sin; and that they rejoice, such is their malice, to hinder our eternal salvation. In the book of Genesis at the fall of man, and in Job at the account of his being tried, we hear only of one such adversary. Here we read, "My name is Legion: for we are many." St. Paul, too, very plainly warns us, Eph. 6. 12, that we have to wrestle, not only "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers;" which he explains to mean those evil spirits, who rule over all that is dark and wicked in this world. No doubt then we are liable to be assailed by them. No doubt there can be, that if we resist them not, they will gradually gain more and more possession of our souls. The man thus devoted to destruction may perhaps neither cut himself nor cry out. But what wounds can be more deadly than those which he is daily inflicting on his spiritual frame by each act of sin? What ery more painful, than that which must soon burst from him in the appointed place, where "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth?" Matt. 8. 12.

The conviction that we are encompassed with enemies, so numerous, so malignant, should fill our thoughts with deep anxiety to defend ourselves from their renewed assaults. Let us not, however, mistake the only method of success. Let us not fail to have recourse to that divine Saviour who alone can cast them out. No man could bind him that was possessed. So neither can any arm of flesh, any strength of our own motives and resolutions, restrain in our hearts those evil propensities which Satan therein stirs up. Vainly should we suppose, that any earthly considerations, as those of prudence, character, or the like, can enable us to avoid the commission of offence, or can suffice to make us pure, charitable, or just. The fetters of this world, the obligations of expediency which this world suggests, may restrain us within the bounds of outward propriety, but they afford no safeguard, either against sin in the heart, or against those evil spirits who aggravate continually its sinfulness. By these will such chains be soon plucked asunder, such fetters soon broken in pieces. Christ and his faith can alone deliver us; his word, and that only, can effectually command, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." To Him then, and to his word, let us have recourse, whatever be our besetting sin; whether the spirit that would possess us work by pride or passion, by the mammon of this world, or by a cold and deathlike indifference to the next.

And observe what is really meant by coming or drawing nigh to Christ. It is thinking of Him more frequently, and so drawing nigh to Him in our minds. It is loving Him more fervently, and so drawing nigh to Him in our hearts. Nigh to us He is ever in reality, whether we perceive Him or not. Whilst our senses are full of this world's objects, we have around us ever another world; a world into which death will in one moment bring us; a world of spirits. Continually do they watch over our souls, some prompting us to evil, some ministering to us for good. But above them all, even as their Lord and Master, is He who once took on Him our flesh, that He might bring us nearer unto Himself. Let us then no longer see Him as afar off; but knowing Him to be near, let us live as though He were near, let us live as walking in the light of his countenance. We live in a world of spirits. Let us then mortify the flesh; and give to things spiritual our most earnest attention. Let us in spirit, in heart and soul, not in form only and outward profession, serve ever our Lord Jesus Christ, the "Son of the most high God."

Grant, Lord, that we in our distress may run from far to worship Thee; may spare no time, or toil, or speed, in finishing the work Thou givest us to do! Cast out from us all evil spirits, all pride and passion, covetousness and sloth! And fill us instead with all good gifts, with grace, and holiness, and peace, and joy!

The evil spirits enter into the swine.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and

clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

§ 128. *How we should endeavour to promote the faith of others.*

The legion of evil spirits beg that they may not be sent out of the country of the Gadarenes. This was because they hoped yet to work much harm to the ignorant inhabitants. Would that they who endeavour to do good, might hence learn the duty of perseverance! Would that the children of light were as patient, as steadfast, as resolute, in their calling, as are in theirs the spirits of evil! They ask leave to enter into the swine; having contrived, as it should seem from the event, having contrived by this means, to tempt the owners of the herd to the sin of rejecting Christ. Our Lord suffers them to do so; "forthwith Jesus gave them leave." Hence we learn, that even under the dispensation of the Gospel, evil is still for a while permitted by God. And we cannot doubt, that if we faithfully eschew it and do good, it will redound in the end to our advantage. We may learn further from what befel the herd of swine, how malignant is the disposition of evil spirits, we may see to what swift destruction they would bring all and every one to whom they could have access. How greatly then are we indebted to that gracious Being, who preserves, from their power and malice, not our bodies only on earth, but our souls also in heaven! who permits their assaults for our greater good; and who giveth us, if only we be faithful to Himself, in spite of their utmost fury, giveth us the victory.

The Gadarenes were now more frightened by the healing of the demoniac, than they had been before by the apprehension of his violence. They saw him "sitting and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid." So apt are the ignorant and the wicked to fear where no fear is, whilst they brave without alarm the terrors of eternity. "And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts." Here we see how the wiles of Satan succeed with the covetousness of mankind. The evil spirits had besought Christ, saying, "Send us into the swine." They then destroyed the swine. And the people, feeling aggrieved at the loss of their herd, besought Christ to depart out of their coasts. They fell into the sin of preferring their vile herd to the preaching of the Gospel by the Lord of life. And we may conceive Him to have suffered the legion to tarry with so carnal minded a people, on purpose that their obstinacy might be made fully manifest, for a warning to the whole Christian world. If He suffer them to tarry among us too for our trial, let us so much the more take heed and beware of covetousness, let us so much the more beseech Christ to remain with us, and not to depart, but to come nigh and help us. Let our danger, and our sense of it, make us so much the more devotedly to put our trust in his power, and our hope in his grace.

And when happily by his goodness we are enabled to escape, when we are made sensible of what we owe to our Deliverer, let us learn further from his words on this occasion, the true method of expressing our thankful love. "He that had been possessed with the devil, prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." It is our Christian duty towards our friends, to impart to them our Christian knowledge, and our Christian hope; and we cannot do any service more acceptable to our Saviour, than to make known to those most near and dear to us his gracious work in the saving of the soul. And yet elsewhere, we know, He counsels us to leave father even, and mother, husband or wife, in order to follow Him. See Mark 10. 29. That is to say, He would have us ready to sacrifice our dearest affections, when they would lead us astray from his service; but when they may be made to promote his honour, then we are to go home, as it were, to our friends. We are to explain to them, and persuade them to adopt any thing we may have learnt of religion more than they. We are to urge it on their consciences, by the testimony of our own experience, and still more by the weight of our example. For of this we may be sure, that no argument we can use, will be one half so effectual, as our own visible improvement in humility, and truth, in sobriety, temperance, and charity, and in all other graces of the Gospel of Christ.

Christ healeth the woman of the bloody issue.

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

22 ¹ And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24 And *Jesus* went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

¹ Matt. 9. 18.

§ 129. *It is through Christ that faith maketh whole.*

Our Lord was on his way to the daughter of Jairus when this healing of the issue of blood took place. The ruler of the synagogue, in his daughter's extreme illness, had applied for the assistance of Christ, and had now to wait for his arrival. Thus the great and the wealthy, no less than the poor, are subject to the visitations of sickness and of sorrow; and must alike wait God's good time for their deliverance. As Jesus went, "much people followed him and thronged him." Some probably went out of curiosity; some perhaps out of a desire to find occasion of offence; but one at least, we know, out of need, out of faith, out of devotion. Thus many times in the Christian community, thus many times in the house of God's worship, numbers enter, or stay, through worldly considerations, for one that comes in the true sense of spiritual need, in the true faith that Christ can heal.

This woman, for her complaint, had suffered many things of many physicians, and "had spent all that she had." So ready are we for the body's health to sacrifice all other objects whatsoever; and yet so slow for the well being of the soul, so slow, either to suffer or to spend. Strange that for an issue of blood one should feel so deep affliction, and so confidently apply for its healing unto Christ; and yet that in our more afflicted state of frailty, our more foul and fatal issue of sinfulness, we should so faintly feel the need of healing, so feebly put our trust in Him from whom only virtue can come out! In applying to the physicians, this woman is to be thus far commended; for whatever be our infirmity or our need, we ought to use all human help we can. To neglect such means would be to tempt God. To put our trust in such means is a more common failing, but it is no other than to be living "without God in the world." Eph. 2. 12. 'This if we were to do in our spiritual infirmities, if we were to rely on our own strength, or on the help of our fellow creatures, we must look for no other success than the woman in her sickness, to be nothing better, but rather to grow worse.

Our Lord, we should here observe, knew in an instant the whole that had taken place; as well that virtue had gone out of Himself, as that the woman had through faith become whole. He sees then, let us remember for our comfort, not only our secret sins, but our most private acts of genuine faith. The more studiously we abstain from ostentation, the more highly will He approve, the more surely save us. The more humbly we fear and tremble, the more have we here encouragement to come forward unto Christ; and to lay hold on the garment of his healing love. "Thy faith hath made thee whole," is his cheering sentence; recorded for the consolation of all who believe. Though it was indeed the virtue that had gone out of Himself, yet does He ascribe the healing to the faith of the person healed. Though it is only through his grace, and the atonement of his death, that we can attain everlasting life; yet does He describe this great gift of God as the wages of our obedience to his will. He it is who alone can make whole, alone save from sin and death. And if He saith it is our faith, let us remember that even our faith is not our own, but his who giveth us the grace to believe.

And here we should mark how it is said of Jesus that He knew within Himself that "virtue had gone out of him." Whence it follows, that in Christ Himself dwelt the power by which all these miracles were performed. When the prophets or apostles did like wonderful works, we never read that the virtue came out of themselves. We are reminded rather, as in the Acts, c. 19. 11. that it was God who "wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." But here the miracle wrought by Christ is ascribed to virtue in Himself. He therefore Himself was the Author of the healing. He, who had been the Maker of the world He overruled. Praised be his name, that virtue is gone out of Him to heal our infirmities, and that faith is given, if only we in earnest pray for it, the faith which can make us whole.

Christ raiseth from the dead the daughter of Jairus.

35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not

dead, but sleepeth.

40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

§ 130. *How we may be raised from the death of sin.*

Whilst our Lord was being thronged by the crowd, and conversing with the woman who had so signally been healed, the daughter of Jairus, whom He was proceeding to visit, in the meantime died. We read not however that the ruler was impatient under the delay. And we shall do well to learn never to grudge any good happening to our neighbour out of the apprehension that it may interfere with our own. For it is usually so ordered by divine wisdom, that the advantage one receives shall not hinder, but rather promote, the benefit of another. And if the damsel was in this instance permitted even to die, it was only that by her restoration to life her father's joy might be increased, and our faith also effectually confirmed. "Be not afraid, only believe," are the words of our Lord, on hearing the sad tidings, "Thy daughter is dead." These words of his we may consider as applying to all those cases of impenitence, or spiritual death, which, whether in others or in ourselves, seem to be most hopeless. For such let us not fail to apply in prayer to Christ. For such, however deeply we fear God's displeasure, let us not for a moment be afraid of his power failing, if only it be his will to raise the dead.

Dead indeed are they who live in this world destitute of that principle of heavenly life which the Gospel is designed to implant. Dead are the hands which are not stretched forth to give. Dead is the tongue that utters not the voice of prayer and praise; dead the heart which feels no love for man, no thankfulness to Christ for his redemption, no joy unspeakable in the hope of heaven above. Many times we must have felt with sorrow this deadness in ourselves, must have wondered at our own coldness in things spiritual; must have mourned to think to what a crown of glory we are called, and how little we think of it, care for it, or desire it. Whether then our consciences thus testify of ourselves, or our anxiety is excited for those we are bound to love, let us in either case obey the injunction here given us by our Lord, "Be not afraid, only believe." An entire trust that God is able, a deep conviction that He is willing, through Christ, to bring unto the knowledge of Himself even those who are most widely estranged; this is what should allay our anxiety in behalf of others, these the motives with which we should continually stir up our own too reluctant hearts.

Then shall we find true also that other gracious sentence of our Lord, "The damsel is not dead but sleepeth." Not as though she was not then really dead; but that death, before Christ, and under the power of his hands, is but as a sleep, from which we shall be summoned by his word, "I say unto thee, arise." Thus may we find it true also in the sleep of sin. Thus may we in our helpless frailty be made by his grace to rise and to walk also in his righteousness and peace all the days of our lives.

Two things our Lord enjoined after this miracle. The first was, that no man should know it; that is, that it should not be so noised abroad as to rouse the jealousy of his enemies, or to imply in Himself any desire for distinction. And further, "He commanded that something should be given her to eat." This might be to prove that she was really alive again as before. It might be designed also to shew us that the special mercies of God do not exempt us from the necessity of using all ordinary means of support. The damsel raised from the dead had need to eat as before in order to sustain life. The soul once effectually converted by divine grace, must wait reverently on all ordinances for future help, for the nourishment of spiritual life and growth. Let something ever be given it to eat. Let prayer be put up for it, and by it, without ceasing. Let it be fed daily with the milk of the word. Let it be nourished with meditation on God's goodness, and on the redeeming love of Christ. Let it be strengthened by the conversation of the godly, by conference on things heavenly, and on heavenly hopes. And hungering, as it thus surely will, for righteousness, let it have ever for its meat and drink to do the will of our Father which is in heaven.

Christ is contemned of his countrymen.

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country: and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, ¹A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. ²And he went round about the villages, teaching.

¹ Matt. 13. 54.

² John 4. 44.

¶ The word signifieth a piece of brass money, in value somewhat less than a farthing, Matt. 10. 9. but here it is taken in general for money.

³ Matt. 10. 14.

⁴ Acts 13. 51.

⁵ Matt. 9. 35. Luke 13. 22.

⁶ Matt. 10. 1.

⁷ James 5. 14.

§ 131. The excuses and the strangeness of unbelief.

His own country, to which our Saviour is now said to have come, was Nazareth, not where He was born, but where He had dwelt from his infancy with Joseph and Mary. There, as it appears from this passage, He had wrought with his supposed father in the business of a carpenter. "Is not this," say they who dwelt there, "is not this the carpenter?" This circumstance may teach us to respect any honest and industrious calling. It may convince all, who work in this or in any other laborious employment, that they are not therefore the less objects of God's love, through Christ, who, whilst on earth, Himself thus wrought. And hence we may do well to turn our thoughts to the excellency of his divine workmanship; to the power and skill of Him by whom the worlds were framed, see Heb. 1. 2; 11. 3; and who saith both of the heavens and of the earth, of the heart of man, of his duty and of his hopes, "Behold, I make all things new." Rev. 21. 5.

That the work He had in hand might more readily be advanced our Lord began at this time to send forth by two and two his twelve apostles, giving them power over unclean spirits, and directions proper for the errand they had in hand. Here we should observe how absolutely He bestows this power as his own gift; as being Himself the Ruler of the universe, to whose will all things were subject, whether visible or invisible. And in the next place let us note how entirely He trusted the success of his apostles to the force of the doctrine they had to preach, and to the divine power which was to sanction it. They were to neglect all ordinary means of human provision. They were to take nothing for their journey, besides a staff to walk with, to be content to lodge at the first house they entered into, and throughout to proceed as persons who felt themselves under such plain guidance and support from God, as no one else has ever had reason to expect. A third thing to be remarked in this commission of the apostles is this: that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the cities which would not receive their preaching. What they preached was that men should repent. And what made men refuse their preaching, was that they chose not to amend their lives. And what made those who so refused more sinful than the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, in God's sight, was this, that they were preached to, not by patriarchs, but by the apostles of Christ, not by angels, but by the blessed Son.

For of our Lord Himself it is here recorded, that even the men of his own city would not receive Him. "They were offended at him." They excused themselves in neglecting the word of Christ by their familiar acquaintance with his former occupation. Whilst the Jews at Jerusalem on the other hand declared, "As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." John 9. 29. So easy is it to find objections to the truth, if the heart is averse to receive it! So ready is the hearer of religious discourse to elude the conviction it affords, by trying to find fault with the preacher! As if the authority of Christ's miracles and word depended upon his having been previously either unknown or known! As if the deficiencies, or even sins of his ministers made it one whit less the bounden duty, one whit less the most important interest, of their hearers, to save their souls alive! "And he marvelled because of their unbelief." He wonders at what He would have us wonder at; namely, our folly and hardness of heart, in refusing, if we do refuse, the preaching of the Gospel. God calls us; and we will not come. Christ speaks; and we will not listen. The Holy Spirit moves us; and we resist. Heaven is before us, and we care not to enter in. Hell is at hand, and we fly not to escape.

God grant that we may not wonder only; but from wonder come to shame and sorrow; from sorrow to repentance, faith, and holiness of life.

Herod puts John the Baptist to death.

14 ¹ And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad :) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

16 ² But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

18 For John had said unto Herod, ³ it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19 Therefore Herodias had ⁴ a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not.

20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and ⁵ observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee;

¹ Matt. 14. 1.

² Luke 3. 19.

³ Or, kept him, or, saved him.

22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

23 And he swore unto her, ⁶ Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27 And immediately the king sent ⁷ an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

³ Lev. 18. 16.

⁴ Or, an inward grudge.

⁵ Or, one of his guard.

§ 132. *The vanity of this world's judgment.*

"Herod," it is said, "feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." Here we have a case of that stony ground, which receiveth the word "with joy." Ch. 13. 20. Here we see how little use it is to hear, even gladly, unless we obey also willingly. Many hear like Herod, and fear, and do many things; who yet do not the one thing needful. See Luke 10. 42. They put not away their favourite sin, they part with all, except that very Herodias, who will in the end bring them to destruction. Let us, when we hear God's word, do not only many things, but all; all things we hear to be our duty. All let us, at least, try to do, in good earnest; least of all, allowing ourselves in the neglect of that one, which we know to be to ourselves most hard.

It was on "a convenient day" that Herodias and her daughter compassed this guilty design. If the heart be bent on evil, it will not have long to wait for opportunity. It may be hard to find a season for well doing. It may be difficult to set apart a convenient hour for prayer, or reading of God's word, for visiting the sick, for clothing the naked, for setting free them that are in prison; or for giving our attention and help to any such good works as these. But if we have a passion to indulge, vanity or revenge to gratify, excess to commit, or slander to report; we find readily for sin, a convenient season. It was when "Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords." So different were his feelings when he heard John preach, and when he saw the damsel dance! So wide apart, unless we duly watch, are our thoughts and purposes at a sermon, and at a feast! See how easily the most appropriate festivities may degenerate into sin! Who, that is duly thankful for the blessings of life, would fail to note with joy the day of his birth? Who, that has ability to entertain his friends, should be backward, on such occasions, to receive them hospitably? Only let us beware, that in our festive moments there be no forgetfulness of God. Only let us watch, lest, in an hour we think not, Satan catch away the word out of our hearts; entice us, out of regard to the praise of man, to transgress the commands of God. Only let us in our festivity never become like unto those, in whose feasts are "the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine;" but "they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hand." Is. 5. 12.

Whilst Herod and his nobles are feasting, whilst the daughter of Herodias is dancing before them, John the Baptist is bound in the prison. He who was sanctified from the womb, ushered into the world with prophecy and miracle, is now loaded with chains; his chamber is dark, and cold, and lonely; his food is "the bread of tears," and "plenteousness of tears to drink;" Ps. 80. 5; whilst the wicked are glorying in their shame, and enjoying the abundance of the earth. Hence we should learn not to take any one's lot in this life for an evidence of his place in the esteem of God. Hence we should accustom ourselves to consider, when surrounded by the comforts of affluence and ease, when beloved by friends, and respected by the world; we should consider that there may be those in the prisons near us, among the most abject and abandoned of mankind, who, in God's sight, rank higher than ourselves. And hence we should continually try to direct our views from the fallible judgment of man, and from the unfinished scheme of Providence on earth, to the end of all things in heaven; to the consummation of goodness, justice, and truth, in the judgment of Christ at the last day.

Christ feedeth five thousand with five loaves and two fishes.

30 ¹ And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And ² they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34 ³ And Jesus when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

35 ⁴ And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy

¹ Luke 9. 10.

² Matt. 14. 13.

³ Matt. 9. 36.

⁴ Matt. 14. 15.

|| The Roman penny is seven-pence halfpenny; as Matt. 18. 28.

§ 133. *That we never lose by hearing and obeying the Gospel.*

The gathering together of the apostles to Jesus, to tell Him what they had done and taught, may remind us how needful it is for ourselves, neither to do nor to say nay thing but what we would willingly tell to our blessed Lord. To Him we must in the end tell all things, give account of all before his judgment seat: of all that we have done ourselves, of all that by our conversation or by our example we have taught others to do. "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." Even apostles must sometimes rest. Even the sacred calling of the Christian ministry is compatible with some kind of relaxation. Even the labours of each single Christian, our wrestling in prayer, our striving for the mastery, our patient continuance in well doing, are graciously tempered, according to the will of Christ, with intervals of refreshment and repose.

In their retirement they are soon surrounded by a multitude, who "ran afoot thither," so great was their zeal! "and outwent them," so eager their speed! So little should we spare fatigue of body, or patient attention of mind, when we may hear the preaching of the Gospel! So eagerly should we forestal the exhortations of our teachers; resorting rather of ourselves, than waiting to be invited and pressed, to God's house or to his sacraments, to the presence of Christ in our common prayers, to the communion of his blessed body and blood! "And he began to teach them many things." This was the first food He offered to these sheep without a shepherd, the edification of the soul. Let this be the first food we too care for, the daily bread we chiefly pray for, the meat we labour for, the wealth, the prosperity, the kingdom we seek for above all. Then shall all other things be added unto us, all things really needful for us; all things He judges to be needful, who alone knows what is for the best.

Thus did He in his good time, "when the day was now far spent," satisfy with food the hungry multitude, who had so long listened to his teaching. Feeding them abundantly with five loaves and two fishes, to the number of five thousand men, He inculcated on them, and through them on us, that, in all means of natural and of spiritual sustenance, it is God who "giveth the increase." 1 Cor. 3. 6. "And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties." This accounts for the numbers being so exactly mentioned; for they could thus the more easily be reckoned. And observe that Christ gave the food to the disciples, to set before the people. Not as though He could not as easily Himself have waited on five thousand, as have fed them with so few loaves and fishes. Not as though it were not as marvellous for the twelve apostles, who are here meant, as it would have been for any one of them, to minister so readily to so large a multitude. Rather may we observe in this circumstance the settled purpose of our Lord, to work often by human means, and to compass by the ministry of feeble man the work of Almighty God.

On the whole we learn from this passage, that we shall never lose by listening to the teaching of the Gospel, or by obeying the word and the will of Christ. We may often be made to wait: but we shall know both how to wait with patience, and how more to rejoice at the last. We should forget, like this multitude, for our Saviour's sake, the cravings of nature; and we shall have them supplied by the blessings of God's providence, or more than made amends for by abundance of his grace. We should be "careful for nothing," Phil. 4. 6, except for his favour; and we shall then be taken care of by Him, who "fillet the hungry," that is, the poor, and honest, and devout, "with good things; and the rich," meaning those who trust in wealth, those who seek it wrongfully, them He "sendeth empty away." Luke 1. 53.

themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred ||pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Christ walketh on the sea.

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before ¶unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47 ¹ And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51 And he went up unto them into the ship: and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52 For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

53 ² And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch ~~it~~ [†]it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched [†] him were made whole.

¶ Or, over against Bethsaida.

¹ Matt. 14. 23.

² Matt. 14. 34.

† Or, it.

§ 134. *That we must cherish a lively sense of our Saviour's presence.*

It appears to have required some effort to persuade the apostles to part from their Master. "He constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before." It is well when we thus love our Lord and Saviour; when we grieve, as we perform the voyage of this present life, to be apart from his blessed presence. In many respects may our existence be compared to this passage of the disciples over the sea of Galilee. We have a sea to cross, the waves whereof are many times high, the wind contrary. Our night is dark, as compared with the light in which God dwelleth; with the day of glory in which we hope to dwell for ever. "He constrained the disciples to get into the ship." We choose not for ourselves, but God chooseth for us, when we shall be born, and in what condition of life, under what degree of light and grace our faith and obedience shall be tried. "And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray." Whilst we toil on earth, our Lord has ascended up on high, and in heaven is making intercession for us. "And he saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary." We must not think to pass over without toil. We have to strive, to wrestle, to run as in a race, to row as against waves and wind. And the wind is contrary. The current of affairs in this world sets strong against our heavenward course. Readily it would help us the other way. Swiftly would the cares and pleasures of life hurry us, unless we toil and strive against their influence, far distant from the haven where we would be.

But though we grieve to be thus absent from our Lord, let us remember, for our comfort, He sees our toil, and in the hour of peril He will come nigh to help. At a distance, and in the dark, He saw the disciples in their difficulty. He seeth afar off, even in heaven, his dwellingplace. He seeth us, and those purposes and struggles of ours, which we deem most secret in the soul. And "He cometh unto them walking upon the sea." Well might they have applied to Him that Scripture, which must have often occurred to them in their former occupation. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters." Psalm 77. 19. But instead of knowing his footsteps, they "were troubled." They had not sufficiently "considered the miracle of the loaves." He, who could multiply food for their support, could walk also on the waters for their assistance. He can, in some way we know not, come nigh to us in all our trials, walk as on the waves of our affliction, and say to our troubled hearts, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

Hence let us for ourselves conclude, first, that all we do, and all we suffer, we do and suffer under the eye of God; under the eye of our Saviour Christ; who seeth us, and willeth not that we perish, but rather that we should be converted and live. Let us accustom ourselves to think of his presence, not with fear only, but with hope and joy; not to cry out, as though it were a spirit, that is, with superstitious terror, but to apply to Him as to a friend, who is able "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Heb. 7. 25. Secondly, let us learn not to be cast down, though in many things we seem not immediately to enjoy the help or comfort of his presence. He "would have passed by" the disciples. That is, as we read in another instance, "He made as though he would have gone further." Luke 24. 28. Though He hide away his face from us for a time, though we feel within ourselves no cheering consciousness of his assisting grace, He is not less sure, if only we have faith, to give us, in the end, salvation. And thirdly, the more lively is our own faith, the more deeply we are convinced of our Saviour's presence for our good; so much the more diligently let us, like the people of Gennesaret, when we know Him ourselves, make Him known to others. Let us, by our life and conversation, make plain to all around us, that heaven is the harbour we are toiling to attain; and that He, through whose help we hope to reach it, is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ reproveth the Pharisees for finding fault with the disciples.

1 Then ¹ came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with ^{||} defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault.

3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands [†] oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4 And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and [†] pots, brassen vessels, and of [§] tables.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not ~~the~~ disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, ² This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye [¶] reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* ³ Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free.*

12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye.

¹ Matt. 15. 1. ^{||} Or, *common*.
about a pint and an half.

[†] Or, *diligently*: in the original, *with the first*: Theophylact, *up to the elbow*.
[§] Or, *beds*.

² Is. 29. 13. Matt. 15. 8.

[¶] Or, *frustrate*.

³ Matt. 15. 5.

§. 135. *That we must beware of sin without condemning the sinner.*

The Pharisees and scribes were displeased with the disciples for eating with unwashen hands. For they, it appears, had a tradition, that is, a rule or custom, handed down from father to son, of washing often, when they ate their meals. This practice they did not so much as pretend to derive from the law of Moses; but they set up, in these matters, the tradition of man, as of equal authority with the revelation of God. Accordingly they "found fault," asking our Saviour: "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?" He applied to them, in answer, a prophecy of Isaiah: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And next He proved the truth of this application, by an instance where the word of God, and the tradition of the Jews, were at variance. For the Law commanded all to honour and succour their parents. But the Jews had a tradition which allowed them to evade this duty by dedicating their substance to God.

And this is the common course, when men take upon them to add any thing as of equal authority with God's commands. They come at last to enjoin what is directly the reverse. First, they give to their own devices an undue importance. Next, they lay aside the commandment of God. Then they contradict and overturn it. This was the course of the Jews in their traditions. Adding these to the Law, they soon set them above, and also against, the Law. This has been the course of that corrupt church, of which Rome is the head. Adding to the Scriptures her own authority, as of equal weight, her rulers keep out of sight God's word, and teach also things exactly the reverse. This too is the course of those extravagant teachers, who, whether in any church, or in none, preach under the notion that they are themselves inspired. Their own fancies, the doctrines and duties of man's invention, they add to the Gospel of Christ, and in the end make to supersede it.

Let us beware of these fatal errors, which make of none effect the word of God, obscure that sun which should give light unto the soul, and blunt that two edged sword, which alone can pierce our hardened hearts. See Heb. 4. 12. But whilst we note what is wrong in order to avoid it, let us at the same time avoid judging, or censuring, or condemning, those who avoid it not. Whilst we flee from evil ourselves, we must endeavour to think no evil of others; but to make for them all charitable allowances, to entertain for them all charitable hope. For in the instance of these scribes and Pharisees, we may see how hateful a thing it is, to be looking out for sins in others, whilst we are blind all the while to our own. Their censure is turned by our Lord against themselves. They set up for judges, and are pronounced to be hypocrites. The disciples might have violated the tradition of the elders. But the scribes and Pharisees had transgressed God's law. Nothing so much helps us to overlook our own deficiency, as this prying into the faults of our neighbours. Whilst we would pull out a mote from our brother's eye, we cannot so much as see the beam that is in our own. When we shall have become faultless ourselves, when we in all things honour our parents, and obey in all things those who are in authority over us, when we believe in Christ entirely, repent thoroughly, and obey perfectly; then will be time, but it is a time that will never come, then will be time, but we shall then have no longer any taste, for finding fault. Meantime let us search into and reform our own lives. Meantime let us pray for our neighbours, both that they may be no less good than ourselves, and that we may esteem them better. See Phil. 2. 3.

Christ teacheth what things defile the man.

14 ¹ And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand :

15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him : but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot

defile him ;

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ?

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 ² For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness :

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

¹ Matt. 15. 10.

² Gen. 6. 5. & 8. 21. Matt. 15. 19.

§ 136. *That out of the heart are the issues of life.*

The doctrine here laid down is to be considered as most important to all of us ; for our Lord, before He declared it, “called all the people unto him,” and “said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand.” It is not enough for us to hear. It is not enough even to hearken, or hear with attention. It is not enough day by day to listen to God’s word here read, or week by week to wait upon the preaching of his word in the church. We must also understand. And for this end we must take very earnest pains. We must prepare ourselves for hearing, with some such thoughts as these : I am about to hear the words of life and death, doctrines which, according as I believe in them or not, will minister to the saving, or condemnation of my soul. I have no business on earth to be compared for importance with this. I have no prospect of advantage so great, as what I may in this book hear of. I have no peril so awful, as that against which I may here be warned. If my thoughts would wander to any projected employment of the coming hours, to any expected pleasure, or apprehended pain ; let me consider, that here I may be told of employment far more deeply concerning me ; of pain far more grievous, and how to avoid it ; of far more exalted pleasure, and how to enjoy it for ever. Thus then, “if any man have ears to hear,” thus “let him hear.” Thus let us hearken to the doctrine which our Lord has here laid down.

It is not the food we eat, the drink we partake of, but the intemperate desire, or the sensual indulgence, with which we crave or receive these things, this it is that renders us in God’s sight unclean. It is not whether our hands are washed or unwashed, but whether they have taken or not taken that which is not ours, that which is not needful for our healthful support, whether they are actuated by a selfish or by a charitable spirit, whether they are lifted up for violence, or stretched out in works of mercy ; on these things we here learn it mainly depends, whether we be defiled or pure, in the estimation of our heavenly Judge. Try to understand this thoroughly, and apply it to your practice continually. And whilst yet you understand not, so as to act accordingly, apply like the disciples, with prayer to Christ ; ask Him concerning the parable, beseech Him to enlighten your thoughts, and to incline also your hearts to obey.

It is the heart, as He here teaches you, that God looks to, the faith which is there cherished, the works of faith which thence come forth. If in it are entertained, or out of it proceed, “evil thoughts,” that is, so much as wicked wishes, these “defile the man.” If in the heart there be “adulteries, fornications,” or any kind of uncleanness, “murders,” or even hatred of a brother, “thefts,” or any dishonesty, “covetousness,” or the love of the world, “an evil eye,” or a disposition to find fault ; if in the heart there be “blasphemy,” whether by swearing, cursing, or lying, “pride,” whether in spiritual or in worldly advantages, or “foolishness,” and especially that wisdom of this world which is “foolishness with God,” 1 Cor. 3. 19 ; if out of the heart these proceed, or are in it, however secretly entertained, they do “defile the man,” they make him to be vile, foul, and hateful, as he is seen by Almighty God.

From these, then, wash yourselves ; from these pray God that you may be washed clean in the fountain of his mercy through Christ. From these defilements pray that his grace may preserve you spotless. From these keep “with all diligence” each his own heart ; for “out of it,” as saith Solomon, Prov. 4. 23, “are the issues of life.” Within are the defilements, within must be the cleansing also. There, where conscience speaketh. There, where the Holy Spirit moveth. There, where Christ, if He dwell at all with you, dwelleth. There you must first be holy, there clean, there pure ; and then, behold, all things are pure unto you. See Tit. 1. 15.

Christ complieth with the prayer of a Syrophaenician woman.

24 ¹ And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26 The woman was a || Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

¹ Matt. 15. 21.

|| Or, *Gentile*.

§. 137. *How we should love and how pray for each other.*

Our Lord visiting for some good end these strangers of Tyre and Sidon, "entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid." This should be our aim in what little good we are enabled to do for each other. We should enter as by stealth into the abode of poverty, making no parade of our alms, or of our prayers; of our zeal for God's honour, or for the good of man. And in cases where it is our duty to make our light shine before men, we should take care that we do so, with no desire that they may more highly esteem ourselves, but with the sole intent that they may more greatly glorify our Father which is in heaven. Then only are we safe in being made manifest, when, like our Saviour, we would be, but cannot be, hid.

To the woman who applied in behalf of her daughter, our Lord made answer, as though He would not have complied with her request. "Let the children first be filled;" the children of Israel, the people with whom Jehovah had made a special covenant, and to whom, according to the promises made unto their fathers, Jesus Christ was especially a minister. See Rom. 15. 8. The woman was a Greek, that is, a Gentile, not one of the family of Abraham. And our Lord's reply to her may serve to shew us, that in a choice of duties, we should carefully consider to which we are most bound by our own proper place and calling. A wayward inclination may prompt us to labour in some other field. But "let the children first be filled." Let us do good to those to whom we are sent, to our own families and friends, to them who are of the household of the same faith, see Gal. 6. 10; and so in order and degree to all mankind. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs." It is our duty to relieve strangers. But it is not meet to relieve them at the expense of our neighbours; to the detriment of these stronger claims on our assistance. It is our duty to love all mankind. But it is not meet so to spread our affection over the world, as to dilute the strength of the regard which is due to those most near to us. Let us love as warmly, and help as readily, our nearest friends, as they do who love and help none others; whilst at the same time we both cherish a true concern for all men, and exercise also according to our ability a readiness to do all men good.

The woman "answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Where God gives much faith, as in this woman, He tries it much. And where He tries it much, this is in order that it may be strengthened, as we see in her, and be blest with a proportionate reward. If often He thus deal with us in our prayers for spiritual healing, if He deny us for a time the gifts of grace, let us learn so much the more highly to value them, so much the more earnestly to plead for them. Let us learn to persevere in prayer; and let us own all the while with humility, that we are unworthy so much as to gather up the crumbs that fall from our Master's table. Then will He "for this saying," if we say it honestly, if we feel it deeply, then will He bid us go our way in peace; He will give us to our souls' health, the bread of life.

Hence, too, we may learn the duty of praying, not only for ourselves, but for each other. It was for her daughter that this woman applied. And He who from her daughter cast forth the devil, can relieve also from the possession of evil desires, from the miseries of sin and death, our parents or children, brethren or sisters, relations and friends. But He requires that we should pray for them, and that urgently. Thus would He bind us to each other by a new and spiritual relationship. Thus do the kind offices of Christian kindred extend beyond the benefits of this present world, beyond the term of this transitory life. Connected we are together by a hope of immortality. And daily should we pray for each other, above all things, that we may be saved; that, as we hope ourselves to dwell with God in heaven, it may please Him to prepare for that blessed place, and to receive into his holy company, the souls of those with whom we here abide.

God help us now to dwell together in love, that then we may dwell together in glory! God make us to be of one mind in an house, and that mind the mind which was in Christ Jesus! God grant, that by forbearance, and forgiveness of injuries, by godly counsel, by kindly help, and by fervent and effectual prayer, we may set forward the salvation of each other!

Christ healeth one that was deaf and dumb.

31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith

unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.

37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

§. 138. *How we may be made, through Christ, both to hear and to speak.*

Isaiah had long before set it down, among the signs of the Messiah's coming, that "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," "and the tongue of the dumb sing." Is. 35. 5, 6. Here we have these prophecies very exactly fulfilled. They bring to our Lord "one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech." "And he took him aside from the multitude." This we may conceive to have been done to prevent any confusion, any possibility of mistake as to which was the man. Next He "put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue." This method our Lord used, to shew that it was He and his power that wrought this cure. He then looked "up to heaven;" as teaching whither we too ought to look in any difficulty we are beset with, in any work we undertake. "He sighed;" it may have been in the earnestness of prayer; according to what the apostle writes to the Hebrews, 5. 7, that "in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." Or it may be, that at the sight of this sufferer, He expressed, by sighing, his kind compassion for the misery that is in the world through sin.

Nor is it here unworthy of our remark, that He thus might signify his concern for the many temptations to which the man was likely to be exposed, by the recovery of his speech and hearing. Better it were for the ears to be ever deaf, than that they should listen with aught of satisfaction to the communing of the wicked. Better that the tongue were for ever tied, than that it should revile, or lie, or swear, than that by any idle word it should utter the irreverence of the heart, or make the hearer to offend. The senses and the faculties God has endued us with are a charge of fearful responsibility. According as here we use them, according to our improvement or neglect of the talent committed to our charge, we shall inherit or be shut out from eternal life. And yet with all the risk of this alternative, the ability to speak and hear, the opportunity of good, are blessings for which we are bound to be most thankful. And the being deaf or dumb, like any other disease of our mortal frame, must be counted for an evil to be deplored, an injury which an enemy has been permitted to inflict. And our Lord, though He might sigh to think how often our senses are abused, was yet, according to his character, doing all things well, in making both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.

Hence, then, let us direct our thoughts to that opening of the ears and of the mouth which is vouchsafed to ourselves in the Gospel; to the opportunity we enjoy of hearing God's word, the ability we receive to speak his praise. Because we are sons, as St. Paul writes to the Galatians, and in proportion as we are obedient sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. See Gal. 4. 6. So also we may in Christ's words hear God speaking to our souls; "for he whom God hath sent speaketh," as Christ Himself tells us, "the words of God." John 3. 34. And in like manner through Christ also has the soul new sight, that faith which is the sight of things unseen, and which the Father hath given us through the Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1. 18. These are privileges most high, things which the prophets and kings of old desired in vain to witness, blessings the possession of which entitles us to be reckoned elect of God, predestinated according to his purpose. Let us then very carefully observe that the greater is the excellency of God's mercies, the more perilous is in us the abuse of them. Let us ask ourselves as we rejoice in this enlightening of the spiritual sense, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2. 3. Let us manifest our deep sense of God's goodness in these gifts, not only by the pains we take to improve them in ourselves, but by the zeal with which we publish them amongst others. For whatever privacy our Lord aimed at in his miracles; whatever silence we may observe as to our own proficiency, we should endeavour always, in spreading abroad the knowledge of salvation, to make others, however deaf, to hear; and force ourselves, however dumb, to speak.

Christ feedeth four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes.

1 In those days¹ the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4 And his disciples answered him, from whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness?

5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets.

9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

¹ Matt. 15. 32.

§. 139. *That we should love each other as God hath loved us.*

Twice it is recorded of our Lord that He fed by a miracle a hungry multitude. And the first instance of his doing so is mentioned in all four of the Gospels. This miracle then we may conclude is of more than common importance; and we ought to take more than common pains to understand it rightly, and to meditate on it frequently. In the first of the two cases, Jesus had five loaves to feed five thousand with. Here seven loaves were used for four thousand. This reminds us of what took place with the manna in the wilderness, "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." Exod. 16. 18. There was no sort of proportion between the means and the end, between the ability to gather and the quantity gathered, between the number of loaves used, and the number of people fed. Wherein we may the more plainly see that it was neither the five loaves which fed the five thousand, nor the seven the four thousand, but the power and goodness of that great Being, who at the first made all things of nothing, and maketh them continually to increase and multiply. Let us then in all the food we take, in every blessing we enjoy, endeavour to discern his gracious hand. Let us feel Him to be the Giver of all good things, of health to the body, of strength and salvation to the soul.

Jesus had compassion on the multitude because they had nothing to eat. He considered mercifully, that "divers of them came from far." And He was willing to relieve their bodily wants as well as to minister to their spiritual necessities. Hence we learn that we are bound to give assistance to each other in both sorts. And though the more we feel the necessity of caring for the soul, the more anxiously we shall desire the eternal good of our fellow creatures; yet are we here taught to promote also, to the utmost of our power, the improvement of their worldly condition. Indigence is herein the true title to our alms; not the merit of the sufferer, but his want. Jesus had compassion on the multitude, even on all both bad and good, because they had nothing to eat. At the same time we must always so administer our assistance as to discourage profligacy, idleness, and waste, both in those whom we relieve, and in those who witness our behaviour. And especially should we give God the glory in all that we are enabled thus to bestow; offering thanks after the pattern of our Saviour in this miracle, for the food which we impart to others, as well as for that which we ourselves enjoy.

When the multitude were filled, our Lord "sent them away." He coveted not their thanks. He needed not their praise. And He hath taught us hereby not to seek any such return for what good we have the privilege of doing to each other. Our desire should be, not to please men but by doing good to men, to the evil and to the good, to please, if it might be, our Father which is in heaven. Our thought should be what He will think of us, He, who dwelling in heaven, yet looketh down upon the children of men, sendeth rain, and also mercy, on the just and on the unjust, and hath taught us that we should, above all things, love one another, even as He hath loved us.

In the wilderness of this world He giveth to the sinful soul of man all food convenient for it; health, unless sickness be rather for our good; wealth, unless poverty may rather redound to our edification. In poverty He giveth contentment, cheerfulness, thankfulness. In affliction He maketh us to rejoice, that herein we may become like unto Christ, who Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain, who entered not into his glory before He was first crucified. Through the cross He suffered, through the death He died, God giveth us yet more than health or wealth, even pardon for our sins, and grace to lead a holy and a Christian life. He gave for us his Son. How utterly then should we devote to his service our time, our strength, our substance, even all that we possess! How carefully should we observe, that then only will they be counted to be given unto Him, when we design, in all we do, the good of all we have to do with.

Christ refuseth a sign to the Pharisees, denouncing their leaven.

10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11 ¹ And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

14 ² Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* ³ because we have no bread.

17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

¹ Matt. 16. 1.

² Matt. 16. 5.

³ Matt. 16. 7.

§ 140. *How we ought to pray, and how to understand.*

Our Lord refuses a sign to the Pharisees, because they asked "tempting him." Here we see, that when we ask, the success of our prayers depends on the frame of mind, and on the purpose of heart, with which we offer them. "And he sighed deeply in his spirit." Whence we learn that He was greatly concerned at their hardness of heart. And we may conclude, that no conduct of ours can be more grievous in our Saviour's sight, than that we should ask in any spirit save that of devotion. Prayer repeated without thought, without desire, what is it but mockery of God? what is it but tempting Him whom we address, provoking Him to decree of the blessings we implore, that there shall no such be given unto us?

Christ would now, as usually He did, improve the opportunity which this conduct of the Pharisees afforded, for a warning to his disciples. "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." That is, take heed of their ill temper and evil doctrine; which, unless you are on your guard, will contaminate your own. Strange it seems, that by the use of the word leaven, they should think He alluded to their having forgotten to take bread. Carnal thoughts, it appears, were uppermost in their minds. And it is well if they are not often in ours also uppermost, at the very time when we are listening to the words of Christ. If we were to express all of us, with the simplicity of the disciples, the things we were each thinking of when this very text was read, how many of us would with shame have to confess, that their minds were running on the bread of this world, on its business, or cares, or enjoyments, whilst their ears heard, without hearing, that blessed word which is the bread of life eternal!

"How many baskets full of fragments took ye up?" is a question that should engage us to our present duties, by reminding us of our past mercies. The many instances of providential care we have already experienced, in "our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," these are what should prevent in us too anxious thought for the morrow of this transitory world. The many miracles of grace, that have been wrought for the refreshing of our souls, for their support in temptation, for their deliverance in death, these are what should exalt our inmost thoughts to God, and warn us, as we hear his word with affectionate desire to know his will. Not merely because we would enter into heaven, not merely that we may escape the snares of hell, but because God hath loved us, and given his Son to die for us, because Christ hath died for us, and because "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John 15. 13, therefore should it be our heart's desire to hear, and understand, and do, all that He hath revealed in the Gospel.

Thus might we escape the reproving question, "How is it that ye do not understand?" If our hearts were intent on learning it, our minds would be enlightened by the heavenly wisdom which shines throughout the book of the revelation of God. Many things there are in it difficult, many things which we must own to be mysterious. Yet many things there are also, which it is our plain duty to know; many which it is a sin not to understand. Let no one dare plead ignorance for neglect of duty, when the ignorance itself is sinful. Let no one by way of excuse say he knows no better, when he might have known better, but for his own fault. "How is it that ye do not understand?" is a question which will present itself again, at an hour when all hearts shall be open, all desires known. And for many there will be then no other reply, than that they cared not to learn, and desired not to improve. Let us, whilst it is called to day, turn ever to the best account we can, the light we have the happiness to enjoy; and above all other knowledge, let us study ever most earnestly to know and to do the things that belong unto salvation.

Christ giveth a blind man his sight.

22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

§ 141. *That things spiritual must be spiritually discerned.*

Our Lord took the blind man out of the town before He healed him. And He sent him away when healed, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town." This has been considered as a reproof to the people of Bethsaida, who had, as we learn elsewhere, see Matt. 11. 20, beheld without repentance and faith the mighty works of Christ. In this miracle, which is mentioned only by St. Mark, we may profitably observe how it was performed by degrees, or at twice. On first looking up, the man remarks, "I see men as trees, walking." His eyesight was restored; but he knew not how to use it. And though no one would readily have thought of this beforehand, it is evident, on reflection, that a person born blind could not at once know how to use, if he had it, the power of seeing, but would be perplexed and confused, as we find children are, about the shapes and distances of the things they see. At first, then, this blind man, though enabled to see both trees and men, seems scarce to have known which was which. Upon this, Jesus again put his hands upon his eyes; "and he was restored, and saw every man clearly." This was indeed no less than a second miracle. The man was at once endued with the same skill in the use of eyesight, as if he had all along been enjoying it like other men.

The like appears to have been the case in other miracles of our Saviour. Else they, who from birth had been deaf and dumb, would not have been at once able either to understand words or to speak them. These they must have taken some time in learning, had not He who healed them at once given the proper faculties of speech or hearing, and bestowed also, at the instant, experience in their use. Thus did he make the deaf not to hear only, but to understand; and the dumb not only to speak, but so to speak as to be understood. Not only was the ear opened, but the mind informed; not only the tongue loosed, but the utterance guided. And those means of conversing with each other, which it ordinarily takes years to make us familiar with, were placed at once within the power of men who knew nothing of them before.

Nor is it otherwise in that healing of our spiritual blindness, whereof this miracle may be taken for a sign and figure. Christ it is, who of his goodness first gives us sight. By the word of the Gospel He opens the eyes of the soul. He enlightens the spiritual vision by the revelation of divine truth. But it is one thing to have thus, as it were, a new spiritual sense; it is another thing to use it aright. It is one thing to have been told of heaven and hell, of Satan's fury and of God's great goodness, of Christ's great love, and of his most precious death. It is another thing to fear his judgment, to hope in his mercy, to believe in the precious atonement of his blood, and so to love his service as to do his will. Yet these latter if we do not, we do but half see. In vain have we the privilege of spiritual light, if we walk not as the children thereof. We do but as it were see men as trees walking. We see heaven indeed, and hell; but we discern them not so effectually apart as to press forward for the one, and to fly eagerly from the other. We see evil angels and good; for we know that we are beset with the wiles of the devil, and encompassed with a cloud of the heavenly witnesses. But we know them not so as to know one from the other; so as to see in the one the enemies of our peace, in the other the ministers to our salvation. What profit then is our new faculty of seeing things spiritual, unless we also spiritually discern them? if we are all the while alike liable to all the ills of blindness, to stumble, to fall; and that, for ever? If Christ hath already once put his hand on us for good, if He hath given us, as we trust He hath, the sight of his truth in the Gospel, let us pray Him that He yet once more touch our eyes; that He may renew in us the faculties of our fallen nature, not to see only, but to see clearly; not to know merely good from evil, but to know good, and to love it: and loving it, to do it.

Grant, Lord, that we may both receive our sight, and have grace to use it according to thy will. Make us to love light rather than darkness. Make us to believe what we cannot see, and to be assured of what we do but hope for; to love the thing which Thou commandest, and to desire that which Thou dost promise; (see Liturgy;) here to behold thy presence in righteousness, see Psalm 17. 16, and hereafter the presence of thy glory. See Jude 24.

Christ acknowledgeth his title ; exhorteth to selfdenial.

27 ¹ And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and begun to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on

his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, ² Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38 ³ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

¹ Matt. 16. 13.

² Matt. 10. 38.

³ Matt. 10. 33.

§ 142. *The Gospel alternative.*

Jesus first asks his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" and afterwards, "whom say ye that I am?" as if purposely implying that what the world said was probably wrong. This should teach us not to mind too anxiously what men say, and to consider how often the testimony of the world is in opposition to the testimony of truth. Upon Peter's answering, "Thou art the Christ," "he charged them that they should tell no man of him." This charge was the more necessary by reason of their notions about the Christ, whom they expected to find a triumphant king. So that the rulers would have been jealous of his title, and the people might very probably have taken Him, and endeavoured to make Him the sort of King they wished for. In order to suppress in them these notions, and to explain to them by degrees the true nature of his kingdom, He warned them that the Son of man, meaning, as they knew, Himself, must suffer many things, and be rejected, and be killed. This was necessary for the great object of this spiritual reign, which must needs be founded on the atonement of his blood. And greatly ought we to rejoice in these tidings; since it is by his death, and by his death alone, that we have hope of eternal life.

But to the disciples this account seemed strange and hard. And to St. Peter it was so unwelcome, that he ventured to rebuke, that is, to remonstrate with, our Lord on the subject. "Get thee behind me, Satan," is the answer of the devoted Saviour. And his meaning is this, that the words of Peter were a snare and suggestion of Satan, tempting him to avoid the sufferings and death by which it was God's will that we should be healed. Satan it is, our adversary the devil, who continually to us also holds out the inconvenience and irksomeness of obedience. He it is, who on the other hand suggests the pleasure of sin, its ease, its pretended safety. When we would renounce the world, it is his voice that whispers, "Be it far from thee." Matt. 16. 22. When we would resist himself, it is he again that pleads, "Be it far from thee." When we design to deny the flesh, and to take up the cross our Saviour bore, by mortifying each ruling passion of our hearts, he it is, even Satan, that still whispers to our ruin, "Be it far from thee." He tells us how pleasant is a worldly life. He urges how painful is God's service, and its end, as he would have us think, a hopeless death.

But in the midst of these suggestions let us never forget, that though life be sweet, and death be bitter, yet is eternal death far more bitter, and eternal life far more sweet. Our Lord would not conceal from us the cost of saving the soul alive. He warns us, that for this end we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Him; that we must be ready even to lose our lives, and to forego the gain even of the whole world, rather than take it in exchange for life eternal. Thus does He plainly tell us the cost. But at the same time He no less plainly declares the awful alternative. Either we must thus walk in Christ's service, thus glory to share his cross, or of us will He be ashamed, as will He refuse to acknowledge for his own, "when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Then will the falseness of the tempter, and the fallacy of all his words, be made manifest to the assembled world. Then shall we feel the force of our Saviour's question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" What will all he has here amassed, all he has here enjoyed, all he has here attained to, avail to redeem it from destruction? On that hour then let us frequently reflect, and endeavour now beforehand to feel, as we shall then, these words of our Lord and Judge. Let us be now on earth content to be as He was here: content, if it be his will, to be afflicted, rejected, persecuted; content to be weary, to be poor, to be sorrowful; content to suffer sickness, pain, and death; that hereafter we may share with Him an inheritance in heaven for ever.

Christ is transfigured.

1 And he said unto them, ¹ Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

2 ² And after six days Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them.

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them:

and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and ³ how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

¹ Matt. 16. 28.

² Matt. 17. 1.

³ Is. 53. 2, &c.

§ 143. *That we should live as in the presence of Christ.*

It was a high privilege for Peter, and James, and John, that they witnessed this transfiguration of their Lord, this foretaste, or first beginning, as we may conceive it to have been, of what He had just before been speaking of, "the kingdom of God come with power." It was a high privilege for them to witness it; nor is it a small matter for us to hear their account of it, as set down in these words of the Gospel. This is among the things which many prophets and kings desire to see, and saw not. See Luke 10. 24. This is what many millions of our fellow creatures are still ignorant of, that the kingdom of God is come with power; that Christ the Son of man is glorified, and that they who believe in Christ, and here suffer with Him, may be also glorified together. See Rom. 8. 17. And thus it is that we should, through faith, discern what is here revealed to us, by learning how near we are, or might be, to the like glory. When we read how suddenly Jesus was transfigured, how soon, together with Moses and Elias, He was seen in this altered state, in this heavenly condition, we should be made sensible how vain are all this world's objects; how false their lustre; how transitory their continuance; and how certainly, behind the veil they make, there is existing ever close to us a kingdom of God, a world of excellence unutterable. To that order of things we might be introduced, as were these disciples, in a single moment, by the summons of our Lord. There we should find Moses and Elias, and other just men made perfect, in constant communion with Christ. Then we should feel, as we ought now to be persuaded, that it would be good for us to be there.

The longer we can uphold ourselves in such thoughts as these, the more we shall be inclined to desire this heavenly change. The more we meditate on that spiritual universe, in the midst of which we have our being, the better we shall be prepared to enter into its enjoyment. And the better we are prepared for that blessed company of saints and angels and of Christ Himself, the sooner, and more surely, as we may safely hope, He will take us to dwell therein for ever. But this state of feeling, this abstraction of the mind, from things seen, to things unseen, is necessarily and frequently interrupted. Suddenly we look around, and we find ourselves on the earth. We see no man any more of all that goodly company; but, in their stead we are beset with the cares and companions of this lower world. We turn from meditation and prayer, from this reading of the Gospel of Christ, from these tidings of his bright transfiguration, to our meals, or to the work of our calling, to the thought of this life's pleasure, to the talk of this world's news. Only, as the apostles when they lost sight of all the rest still saw Jesus "with themselves," only let us also endeavour, in all we do, and say, and think, still to see Christ, by faith, as present in our company.

He, we should remember, He, if only we be faithful in his service, He is with us "always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28. 20. Of Him then we should always think as present to our souls; of Him always so think as in all things to obey Him. Each hour of our lives, each duty we have to do, each meal to eat, each word to utter, we should act as under a sense of his presence, as under the influence of his counsel, as in the hope of his glory. Then should we haste, as St. Peter bids us, "unto the coming of the day of God," 2 Pet. 3. 12; anxiously look forward, and press forward, to the attainment of his eternal joy. And at the same time we should not murmur at having to wait for a while, or at suffering many things in this mortal life, as did his messenger Elias, and as did Christ Himself, until the time of death and resurrection. For what should be of greater comfort to a Christian than to be made like unto Christ in suffering? And what can be more encouraging to our zeal, than the assurance that "now are we the sons of God;" and that, though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is!" 1 John 3. 2.

Christ casteth out a dumb spirit.

14 ¹ And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye || with them?

17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he † teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pincheth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since

this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.*

26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

¹ Matt. 17. 14.

|| Or, among yourselves

† Or, dasheth him.

§ 144. *That we must add to our faith prayer and selfdenial.*

On our Lord's coming down from being transfigured, "the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed." This we may suppose arose from somewhat of heavenly glory, like to what we read of in the case of Moses, see Exod. 34. 30; still shining in his countenance. During his absence the disciples had occasion to experience their entire dependence on his help. For whilst a great multitude were gathered together, the scribes were questioning with them, because they could not succeed in casting out a dumb spirit. This was one of the many ways, in which the devils were permitted at that time most evidently to possess the bodies of mankind, so as to give proof to the outward sense both of their own evil agency, and of the power also of Him by whose word they were cast out. In this instance the malice of the devil is shewn in the violence of the person possessed, in his foaming and gnashing with his teeth, and in his pinning away. And the power of Christ is illustrated in his healing one who had been so long deemed incurable, one whom his apostles in vain had tried to heal.

The father indeed, desponding at their want of success, doubts almost the ability of our Lord Himself. "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe." Such is the infirmity, the perversity of man! We question in our healing the power of Christ; when we ought to question only our own faith. We think as though God could not redeem us from sin, could not make us keep our good purposes, could not confirm us in holiness of life. We ought to think that He both can do so, and will; if only we believe. We ought to feel that it is our faith, and that only, which is wanting to the casting out of all evil spirits that possess us. We ought to know that the only question is, not whether God is able, but whether we are willing; willing to be made whole, willing to believe that we can be healed. We ought to remember, that "all things are possible to him that believeth."

Whilst the father of the child seems to have been wanting in faith, the disciples had been neglectful of fasting and prayer. This accounted for their failure; and this probably will account for our's, where-insoever we are conscious that we fall short of what by God's grace we might attain. Either we have not faith, or we exercise not our faith in the denying of ourselves, and in praying unto God. Our faith, if it thus work not, is dead. Our faith if we neither pray nor practise, is no faith at all. To mortify the flesh, to renounce the world, to refuse ourselves the indulgences we have a mind to, however slight be our ground to suspect that they may hinder our Christian progress, to put our whole trust in the strength of God, and to ask for it in most deep humility of heart, these things must be made good on our parts, for Christ to take us by the hand, and lift us up. These things if we make good, and that through faith in Christ, then is there no spirit so powerful, no sin so deeply rooted, but what He will charge it both to come out of us, and to enter in no more. Thus may we also become "as dead," dead to sin; relieved from its influence for the present, and for the future so supported against it, that it shall have no more dominion over us.

Let us then at once profess heartily our faith, and sincerely acknowledge its infirmity. Let us say with this "one of the multitude," "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Take, Lord, what faith we have, and make it more! Accept what poor service we perform, and make it better! Regard with mercy what faint love we feel; and make it more devout, more pure, more worthy of Thyself, more like to thine!

Christ foresheweth his death, exhorteth to meekness and humility.

30 ¹ And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

33 ² And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be the greatest*.

35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all.

36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

¹ Matt. 17. 22.

² Matt. 18. 1.

§ 145. *How we should avoid falling out by the way.*

Our Lord in passing through Galilee avoided all public notice. And where He might have received men's homage for his mighty works, He rather occupied Himself in preparing the disciples to expect his approaching sufferings. "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him." So would it be well for us also, when most we are in the way of praise or prosperity, to call to mind that we have a death to die; and to turn from the enjoyment of this world's happiness to contemplate the glories of the next. For to the tidings of his death our Lord adds, by way of comforting the disciples, the assurance of his resurrection: "and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day." But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him." When we understand not Christ's word, the fault is commonly our own; we consult not as we ought his Scriptures, we ask not as we ought of Himself in prayer. And commonly also it is this very fault, that we are afraid to ask Him; afraid to acquaint ourselves with the truth, afraid lest it should condemn our pride, confute our prejudices, and constrain us to renounce the practice of our sins. Oh that we may have grace to ask, and diligence to search, and a holy courage to adopt, and to perform, the will of our Saviour Christ!

Whilst the disciples should have been applying this discourse of their Lord to their spiritual edification, they had been, it seems, disputing by the way, "who should be the greatest." Thus they had transgressed at once in two most plain points of Christian duty, humility and love; humility in their each desiring to be the greatest, and love in their disputing about it. And this they did even when Christ was near at hand to them, though probably, as they reckoned, out of hearing. They considered not, as we too are very apt not to consider, that He heareth every idle word we utter, and will call us to account for them hereafter. See Matt. 12. 36. He will demand, of our vain conversation, of our wranglings and quarrellings, in the journey of life, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?"

What answer shall we hereafter have to give? What confession can we now make, but that we are contending for being the greatest; that our bickerings arise from our own ill tempers, and that our own ill tempers are selfishness and pride. We would fain have the first place in the dispute. We are determined therefore to have the last, the loudest word; to say the severest, the most irritating thing. We exalt ourselves, by depreciating our neighbours. We vex their vanity, that we may indulge our own. From these and other like beginnings, from our lusts that war in our members, from these spring not disputes only and quarrellings in families, but all wars also, and fightings in the world. See James 1. 4. Few and evil as are the days of our pilgrimage; see Gen. 47. 9: what folly can be greater than that we should thus embitter them with jealousies and animosities amongst each other?

Let us learn from the words of Christ, that this conduct is not only the height of folly, but is at the same time the height of sin. Let us remember the sentence He has here pronounced, "that if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Let us look to the instance He set before us in a child; "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." To be the last of all, will be the lot of those who here desire to be the first. And to be now the servant of all, is the way to be hereafter exalted. For this is the limit of our allowed ambition, that we should here labour, as in service, for the good of all mankind. And our rule, if we would be counted to have received Christ, is this, that we here receive each other, treat each other, as we would little children. This we are to do in point of gentleness, and forbearance. We are to put up, as we would in the case of children, we are to put up with the ignorance, the waywardness, the perversity, and the selfishness of others; as we have many times deep need that they should bear with us in our own.

Oh, that we might so heartily desire to be here the last, that we may hereafter be found among the first! Oh, that we might give place to each other, not by constraint only, and subjection, see Gal. 2. 5, but by preference of choice! Oh, that we might as servants be obedient to each other, "not answering again;" Tit. 2. 9; as children be humble; and as to children, be compassionate and kind!

Christ speaketh of offences and of hell fire.

38 ¹ And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: ² for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

41 ³ For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

42 ⁴ And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

43 ⁵ And if thy hand || offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 ⁶ Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye † offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, ⁷ and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

50 ⁸ Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

¹ Luke 9. 49.

² 1 Cor. 12. 3.

³ Matt. 10. 42.

⁴ Matt. 18. 6.

⁵ Matt. 5. 29. & 18. 8.

|| Or, cause thee to offend.

⁶ Is. 66. 24.

† Or, cause thee to offend.

⁷ Levit. 2. 13.

⁸ Matt. 5. 13.

§ 146. *That we must serve God through grace or perish everlastingly.*

St. John seems to have thought that he and the disciples had done well, in forbidding some one else, who followed them not, to cast out devils in the name of Christ. Or it may be that he mentioned it by way of owning that they had already transgressed our Lord's injunction of receiving even a little child in his name. In either case, the answer teaches us, first, never to forbid those who do, or attempt to do, any thing really good in Christ's name; but rather to esteem as on our side in his cause all who are not actually against us. So that we should resolve, however much we may differ in smaller matters to give the right hand of fellowship to all, who design and endeavour to do good for the sake of our blessed Lord. For, secondly, we must not only not forbid, we must encourage and assist those who thus belong to Christ. We must act under the persuasion that any kindness shewn to them, though it were no more than a cup of cold water to drink, any kindness shewn to them by us, out of regard to their belonging to Christ, will in no wise lose its reward. And, thirdly, we learn here the guilt and punishment of offending one of these little ones; that is, tempting to sin, any one, however unworthy, out of those, who truly believe in Christ. Whatever may be their deficiencies, and how know we but that our own are greater? whatever their mistakes, and how know we but that our own are more censurable? whatever be their errors or their failings, we are bound to feel for them a brother's anxiety, that they should not perish. And if they perish through our fault, through our ill persuasion, or ill example, we shall have to answer as for a brother's blood.

From the peril of thus offending a brother, our Lord turns our attention to the risk of being ourselves offended by hand, or foot, or eye; led, that is to say, by any member into sin, made by it to transgress the will of God. Rather He advises and commands us to cut them off, pluck them out and cast them from us, rather actually to maim ourselves, if necessary, than sin. And that for this one plain consideration: it is better to enter into the kingdom of God, destitute of these limbs or functions, than with the possession of them all in perfection to be cast into hell fire. It is better to have no sense of feeling here, no power to walk, or work, or see, than by seeing or working, or walking sinfully to come to the fire of that hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where the suffering to be endured will last for ever and ever.

"For," adds our Lord, "every one shall be salted with fire." That is to say, every one who is thus to be punished will, by the very nature of that eternal punishment, be preserved to endure it for ever; even as the flesh of the sacrifices, according to the law of Moses, is salted with salt, which preserves it. Thus "every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Every one who perishes, under the divine displeasure, every one who is cast into hell fire, must suffer in that fire for ever. "Salt is good;" that is, salt signifies also that principle of holiness, shed abroad by God's grace in the heart, which may preserve us, through Christ, from perishing everlastingly. But "if the salt have lost his saltiness," if we have neither faith, nor grace, nor holiness, we are good for nothing but to be cast out. Either we must have in ourselves salt in this sense, the salt of purity and peace with each other, or else we shall be liable to the fearful question, "Wherewith shall ye season it?" Either we must present ourselves, our souls and bodies, living sacrifices unto God, holy, acceptable unto Him through Christ, or we must be cast, as were the sacrifices, into the fire, so must we be sentenced to perish from the presence of God, in the place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The Lord season us with the salt of heavenly grace, that we may escape the salt of hell fire! The Lord make us to have peace one with another, that we may rest in peace with Him! The Lord preserve us from offending any one of them that believe in Him! The Lord make us heartily to feel, that in his cause, whosoever is not against us is on our part!

Christ answereth the Pharisees on divorcement.

1 ¹ And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not

man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*.

11 ² And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

13 ³ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*.

14 But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16 And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

¹ Matt. 19. 1.

² Matt. 5. 32. & 19. 9.

³ Matt. 19. 13.

§ 147. *That we may not sever what God has joined together.*

St. Matthew, in describing this visit of Jesus to the farther side of Jordan, says of the people who resorted to Him, that "he healed them there." Matt. 19. 2. St. Mark speaking of the same time and circumstance, says, that, "as he was wont, he taught them again." Hence we collect, that He both taught and healed them. And we may here observe also, that these two offices were in Christ all as one; that his healing was itself the most forcible of teaching, and his teaching the best of healing, the healing of the soul. And thus always are those passages truly consistent, which seem at first sight to be at variance, in the different Gospels. And usually also we may derive from their comparison, some such lesson of instruction in our Saviour's conduct, or in our own Christian duty.

Whilst our Lord was thus employed in doing good, He was tempted by the Pharisees with a captions question on the subject of divorce. They would gladly have obtained his sanction for their own licentiousness of practice. And they supposed that He could not refuse it, without plainly contradicting the Law, as revealed by Moses. We should note the wisdom of a reply, which left them neither excuse in their conduct, nor matter of accusation against his own words. He shews them from the writings of their lawgiver, the principle on which marriage is inviolable. He refers them to its first institution as recorded by that same Moses, by whose law they professed to abide. He quotes what is there said of a man's leaving his father and mother, in order to cleave to his wife; see Gen. 2. 24; leaving us to infer, that therefore a man must not for any other, leave her, for whose sake he leaves all else. He teaches that it is God who joineth together them that are married; and points out how wrong it must therefore be for men to put them asunder.

This last principle we may apply to all things which God has in his word united. And we should thus reflect how sinful it is for man to put asunder faith from works, grace from holiness of life, the happiness of heaven from obedience on earth. Many would as it were divorce this close connexion between our duties and our privileges. Many would hold with so much only of the Gospel, as they can wrest in favour of their own indulgences; and repudiate that portion of it, which demands of them selfdenial and amendment of life. But let not us so put asunder what God hath joined together. Either we must admit the whole Gospel, with all its parts, in their due proportions, or we have no ground to hope that any of it will profit us. Either we must receive its most hard sayings, its most severe threatenings; or else its most gracious promises will not avail to our safety. For to the whole Gospel we may in this sense apply what is said by the apostle of one book of it: "if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." Rev. 22. 19.

To the Pharisees, who tempted Him, our Lord answered with out displeasure, as plotting only against Himself. With the disciples who rebuked those who brought the children, "he was much displeased," "for of such is the kingdom of God." He was displeased because of his love for the children. He was displeased because of his love for the disciples. He would have had them kind to the children. And the children He wished to take up in his arms, and bless. Then only may we without sin feel displeasure, when it is for the wrongs which others suffer; when we love none the less sincerely those whom we would censure, and all the more affectionately help and pray for those in whose behalf we are displeased.

Christ answereth one inquiring of the way of life.

17 ¹ And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.*

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

¹ Matt. 19. 16.

§ 148. *How hardly the rich enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

We learn from St. Matthew, 19. 20, that it was a young man who here asked of our Lord the way to inherit eternal life. It appears also, that he had been brought up from infancy, in what he reckoned to be obedience to the commands of God. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him." So free is He to love, where we do but ill deserve! So amiable in the sight of our blessed Lord is even the comparative innocency of youth! So much to be desired, at all times of life, is that frank and ingenuous disposition which should flow from right training in our early years!

But often, when we most think that we have obeyed, we are far from the obedience which our Lord intends for us. And to convince this young man of his deficiency, and through him to convince us of ours, our Lord "said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." And this proposal, so grievous to the hearer, is recorded in the same verse in which Jesus is said to have "loved him." So that it is compatible with most true affection to suggest what for the time may make us sad, in order that it may be better for us in the end. And not only is this consistent with true Christian love, but it is one of the most excellent ways in which it can be shewn. Nothing being more painful to our own evil nature than thus to remonstrate with our friends. And nothing being more profitable to them than such godly counsel and reproof, when faithfully and affectionately administered. And this is the right account of every hard saying in the word of God, of every difficult command set forth in Scripture by our "Good Master." They are tokens that He loveth us. They are proofs, as are also his severest chastisements, whether sickness, or sorrow, or privation, proofs that He careth for our welfare, and taketh pains to secure our salvation.

And especially is this true of the hardships of poverty, of the privations which are endured, by far the greater part of mankind, in the absence of this world's wealth. For these, we may in many cases see, are helpful to the attainment of the Christian character; as of riches, on the other hand, it is notorious, and as Christ does here very plainly teach of them, that they make it the more hard for us to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Not that this is true of the mere possession of riches, but, as our Lord goes on to explain it, of the trusting in them; and so far only true of their possession, as that very many who have them, trust in them. "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" How hard to become holy and heavenly minded! How hard to attain unto everlasting life! How hard for them that trust in riches! Harder for them that have ever so little wealth, and trust in it, than for those who have ever so much, and trust not! But must we not here add, how hard is it to have much, and not to trust; not to be puffed up by the deference and attention which wealth ensures from others; not to be enamoured of the manifold conveniences which it enables us to procure for ourselves! Let each, therefore, as he is reminded of these dangers of the rich, be content with such things as he hath; see Heb. 13. 5; with such portion of this world's good as God has thought fit to bestow. Let none long to have their store increased, but strive rather that they may have a good account to give of what they already possess. Let us consider that God looks not to how much we have, but how honestly we obtain it, how rightly use it. And let us acknowledge, whilst we hear with joy that "with God all things are possible," let us acknowledge, that without his grace preventing and assisting us, in all we do, to enter into the kingdom of heaven would be to all, whether rich or poor, to all alike "with men impossible."

Make us, good Lord, more anxious to improve our gifts, than forward to increase our store; if rich, more careful to find objects for our alms, than if poor, helpers for our need. Teach us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20. 35. Instruct us both how to abound, and how to suffer want. And enable us, through thy grace, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content. See Phil. 4. 11.

Christ on the way to Jerusalem.

28 ¹ Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31 ² But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

¹ Matt. 19. 27.

² Matt. 19. 30.

32 ³ And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33 *Saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

³ Matt. 20. 17.

§ 149. *That there is no safety in ignorance of danger.*

It was on hearing how hardly they who trust in riches enter into the kingdom of heaven, that St. Peter was tempted to reflect in somewhat of a vainglorious spirit, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." Our Lord in reply first asserts, that they who do in earnest so leave all for his sake, and the Gospel's, shall receive, with their persecutions, "an hundredfold now in this time." He then remarks, in reference, as we may justly suppose, to this gracious retribution, that "many that are first shall be last; and the last first." Many, that is, who may here be thought, or may think themselves, to have done most for the sake of Christ, are by Him accounted to have done least. Whilst they who deem most humbly of their own good works, will find them to be by Him most highly valued. And this may help to account for what we are apt to deem the unequal distribution of this world's good and evil. They whom we reckon first being often in God's sight last; and they whom we mistake for the last, first.

This clause thus understood, seems to have been designed also for a reproof and a warning to St. Peter; a reproof of his boastful words, a warning of his future fall. Or at all events we may do well to apply it in this sense to ourselves, and to the estimate we form within our own hearts of our title to the divine mercies. We are bound indeed to acknowledge how hundredfold this life's blessings, when enjoyed with the grace of thankfulness, outweigh its utmost evils when borne with resignation. We are bound also to feel deeply how hundredfold the consolations of religion, the sense of being accepted of God through Christ, the assurance of hope, the hope of heaven, overpay the persecution or privations which our religion requires us to bear. But we must be cautious lest we too readily set down to our own credit, and to the cause of the Gospel, sufferings which in many instances arise from our own folly and fault. The real hardships of poverty, for instance, how rarely do they occur, save through idleness, wastefulness, or improvidence! The pains of sickness, how almost uniformly may they be traced to our own carelessness of health, to our indolence, our intemperance, or the indulgence of too thoughtful anxiety for this life's transitory blessings? Never then let us dare, whilst suffering from causes such as these, either to murmur at the chastisements of God, or, setting them down to the score of self-denial, to reflect within ourselves, or boast as to our Lord, "we have left all, and followed thee." A sentiment such as this will ill become us, till we have continued, as we can scarcely hope to do, without falling, faithful to the end; or have been enabled, as we never can be, like Him to suffer as He foretold He should, to be delivered unto death, with mockery, and scourging, and spitting, all borne in meekness, for the benefit of mankind.

These things He now mentioned beforehand, as He went up, on his way to Jerusalem; and whilst the disciples who followed Him "were afraid." There is no safety in ignorance of danger. The more they feared, the more He thought it meet to apprise them of how much both He and they had hereafter to go through; how sorely they would be tried in their fidelity and affection, when He should be condemned to death. But to these sad tidings He at the same time adds, that on the third day He should rise again. If it be well that we should know our danger, it is well that we should be also informed of our deliverance. It is well that to a salutary fear of evil we should add, for the perfecting of true Christian courage, a lively hope of good. It is well, that in the sufferings of this present time, we should learn to put our trust in God's promise for the future; and to set our hearts, with the full assurance of faith, on "the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8. 18. Thus might we best enjoy in this life the manifold blessings which arise from "houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands." And thus, though persecution be added to our lot, though affliction in any form or amount be dispensed to us by the will of God, we have the present and powerful consolation, that there is laid up for us, according to the same divine will, "in the world to come eternal life."

Jesus answereth James and John.

35 ¹ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39 And they say unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared.

41 And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42 But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, ² Ye know that they which *||* are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

¹ Matt. 20. 20.² Luke 22. 25.*|| Or, think good.*§ 150. *Christian precedency.*

We see here a great perversion of the Christian's privilege, "Ask, and ye shall receive." John 16. 24. We hear apostles praying for precedency in the kingdom of Christ, as in some earthly dominion. And some perhaps will reason, that if pride might thus find place in St. James and St. John, it may the better be excused in themselves. Rather we may hence profitably conclude, that we are all in great danger of its manifold temptations; rather be led by what we read of in their hearts, to suspect what may be lurking in our own. Their failings were not excusable in them; much less are the like sins excusable in us who have their fall set before us for our warning.

Most unreasonable was the request preferred, as St. Matthew tells us, by the mother of these apostles, and, as here we read, urged also by themselves; to sit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, of their heavenly Lord. No less vain and sinful are our frequent attempts, to secure for ourselves the first, the best, and the most honourable things, of all that seem to lie within our reach. Let not, however, the pride and selfishness of one move jealousy or anger in another. Whilst we avoid the ambition of the two apostles, let us avoid also the displeasure of the ten. The faults and follies of our brethren, even when they operate to our personal hindrance, should be the subject not of our wrath, but of our tender concern. The displeasure of the ten seems to shew that they entertained somewhat of the same ambition as St. James and St. John; else why should they have felt hurt by their request? It is a proof of pride to be made angry by the pride of others. The remonstrance of our Saviour implies, that all such feelings, whether openly expressed, or secretly entertained, are alike unworthy of the Christian character. We must neither ourselves push forward for undue precedency, nor be vexed with those who do so. And the more readily we yield to others even a preference which is not their due, the more surely we shall secure for ourselves that eminence which cannot else be ours.

Authority, for the like reasons as wealth, makes it hard for them that possess it to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Authority, and honour, and rank, tempt to vanity, and arrogance, and presumption. They are privileges which are beset with snares; talents of which a strict account will be difficult to give, though sure to be required. And this is true even of spiritual attainments, which it is well to desire, but not well to be proud of when attained; well to strive after, but not well to endeavour to reach by any measures injurious to the welfare of our neighbours. Whosoever then would be great, whosoever would be the chiefest, let him be as the servant of all, let him be as the minister of all. Let him set before himself the pattern of the Son of man, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Greater is he who submits, than he who assumes to himself the power of command. Greater is he who forgives a wrong, than he who is displeased at it, who resents it. But greatest and chiefest of all are they, who in a spirit of affection to their Saviour Christ, set themselves to be the servants of all around them, by bearing with their ill tempers, ministering to their wants, and doing them all good to the uttermost. And who that is so engaged, who that is in earnest seeking to be first in extent of service to God and man, hasting not to grow rich or great, but only to grow fit for the coming of the day of God, see 2 Pet. 3. 12; who that is so seeking to advance himself, would wish to advance himself to the detriment of his brother; or would grudge that his brother should share with him to the full, or if it so seem good to God, should be advanced before him, in the good work he has to do on earth, or in those better things which he hopes to enjoy in heaven?

Christ giveth sight to blind Bartimæus.

46 ¹ And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to

be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

¹ Matt. 20. 29.

|| Or, *saved thee.*

§ 151. *How we should draw near to Christ.*

This Bartimæus was one of the two blind men who are mentioned by St. Matthew, 20. 30, as having been healed at this time by our Lord. His faith was shewn both in his persevering to pray, and in his acknowledging Jesus to be the Son of David. "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." This prayer he continued to repeat, even when "many charged him that he should hold his peace." Thus ought we to continue steadfast in prayer, and firm in our profession of the Christian faith, however many of those we live with may urge us to live more unto the world. Many are the pleas with which those who delight not in piety themselves endeavour to discourage it in others. They will tell us that our prayers are too many, or too long, our conscience too scrupulous, our study of God's word too careful, that our conversation is too serious to be agreeable, and the life we aim to live, incompatible with the convenience of the world we have to live in. Whosoever thus they charge us to hold our peace, whosoever they would silence that painful testimony which the works, as well as the words, of the faithful, ever bear against the practice of sin; let us only "cry the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me." Let the temptations which arise from evil communication, such as we must often encounter in this present life, make us so much the more to have recourse in prayer to Him by whose grace we stand. If thus we persevere in calling faithfully upon Christ, He too will in his good time call us. He will draw us nearer and nearer to Himself. In each hindrance we experience, in each fall we meet with, a voice of comfort will be heard within our hearts: "rise, he calleth thee." Are we afflicted with this world's sorrow, visited with sickness, mortified by the disappointment of our favourite plans, vexed with the ill temper or ill treatment of those from whom we most look for kindly aid? Are our hearts sad within us at the many miseries of our lost estate, at the pain in which the whole creation now groaneth and travaileth together? See Rom. 8. 22. In these moments of despondency let us betake ourselves to earnest prayer, and we shall receive for our reply: "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." He calleth thee to a life which is no longer vanity, a life of holiness acceptable to God, and full of satisfaction to thyself. Or is it at sin we mourn, at our own many failings and large frailty, at our backwardness to love God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, at our unworthy thoughts of the heaven we hope for, thoughts how unworthy of a hope so high! Do these spiritual afflictions made sad our hearts? Let them also make frequent, and make earnest, our prayers. And then shall we again receive for our reply: "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." He calleth thee from earth to heaven. He calleth thee to suffer for a while, to be estranged a short space from the light of his countenance, only that after the more perfect trial of thy faith, thy more patient continuance in well doing, He may give thee the more exalted place in the glory that shall be revealed.

At these words of encouragement, blind Bartimæus, "casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." And afterwards, when he had obtained his sight, he made use of it in the following of Christ: "immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." So should we, as we have the grace to draw near unto our Lord, lay aside every weight, rid ourselves of every hindrance, and especially renounce and resist the sin that doth most easily beset us; see Heb. 12. 1; that particular offence, whatever it may be, which, as a garment, cleaves to us, and elogs us in our course. And so also, when our faculties have been through grace enlightened, and our souls have been made to see the things that belong unto our peace, so must we follow Jesus in the way, in the way that He hath gone before us, in the narrow way that He would have us walk in.

God grant that we may both have grace to see, and seeing may have grace to walk in the way that leadeth unto life! God grant that we may hate even "the garment spotted by the flesh;" Jude 23; and may be clothed instead in that "fine linen," which "is the righteousness of saints!" Rev. 19. 8. God help us, when we fall, to rise; when sad, to be of good comfort; the more we are hindered, the more to persevere; and the more discouraged, the more to pray!

Christ rideth in triumph into Jerusalem.

1 And ¹ when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where twq ways met; and they loose him.

5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had

commanded: and they let them go.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

¹ Matt. 21. 1.

§ 152. *The humility, the foreknowledge, and the prudence of our Lord.*

See how our Lord chooses for his triumph, that He may fulfil the words of the prophet, to ride upon "a colt the foal of an ass." Zecl. 9. 9. See in his riding on a colt "whereon never man sat," the fulfilment of those types in the Law, the heifer for sacrifice "upon which never came yoke," Num. 19. 2, and the two mule kine, "on which there hath come no yoke," appointed for the drawing of the ark. 1 Sam. 6. 7. See how, when He most nearly approached to the show of worldly state, He was content, for example of humility and love, to ride upon a borrowed colt; as He ate also the passover in a borrowed chamber, and was hurried in another man's sepulchre! How dare we then so earnestly covet to possess always something of our own? How dare we so proudly be ashamed to borrow, so hardly consent to lend? Let us practise both parts of Christian charity. Let us be willing to be beholden to our neighbours, in the presumption that they are glad to give us aid. And let us give freely to them that ask of us, and from him that would borrow of us turn not away. See Matt. 5. 42. Thus might we the nearest approach in practice to the spirit of those primitive disciples, who had, we read, "all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need." Acts 2. 44, 45.

In this account of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, we may remark also his singular exercise of divine knowledge, in directing his two disciples to the exact place where they would find the colt tied. He knew also, it seems, beforehand what would be said to them by the people of the village: "What do ye, loosing the colt?" And He knew also that on being told, "the Lord hath need of him," they would straightway send him. Herein we see one chief attribute of God our Saviour; He understandeth our thoughts "long before." Psalm 139. 1. He heareth, when we think He heareth not. He seeth, when we seem to be out of sight. He seeth where we are, and what we do, and whether our inclinations are conformed to his will. If then there be many evil things which we feel ashamed to do before men, how much more should we be ashamed before God to think any evil thoughts! How much more should we fear to harbour any evil wish, to do, however secretly, any evil deed, when we consider that our blessed Lord is privy to all that passes in our inmost souls! Let us pray all the more earnestly for the past, that He may forgive us our secret sins, even those also which are unknown to ourselves. And for the future, let us both pray and strive, that He may hear from our lips, and see in our hearts, only that which is good!

Having thus entered into Jerusalem, Jesus stayed not to sleep there; but when he had first looked round about upon all things, in the evening He returned unto Bethany. Thus the daytime He employed in public duty; He spent it in the tumult of the city, in the courts of the temple. In the evening He retired, with the twelve, to the peaceful village, and to his friends. His work was such as courted the light. His enemies were such as wrought in the darkness. He withdrew Himself, therefore, during the night, from useless risk; and, where He could be doing no good, was not willing to expose Himself to harm. Such, at least, is the lesson we may do well to learn from this passage in the history of our Lord. And thus may we best walk in his steps, if, whensoever the occasion requires it, we boldly maintain God's cause, in the face of his enemies, and in the light of day; and gladly also withdraw ourselves, when the exigency of his service allows, to the sober and seasonable enjoyment of reflection, retirement, and friendly conversation.

Christ maketh the fig tree wither, cleanseth the temple.

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry :

13 ¹ And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

15 ² And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

¹ Matt. 21. 19.

² Matt. 21. 12.

⁴ Matt. 7. 7.

19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

20 ³ And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, || Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

³ Matt. 21. 19.

⁶ Matt. 6. 14

|| Or, Have the faith of God.

§ 153. *That we should pray with faith, and with forgiveness.*

The fig tree, which to our Lord when hungry yielded "nothing but leaves," though "the time of figs," that is, of fig gathering, was not yet, so that there might naturally have been figs found on it; this barren fig tree is here made by his grace and goodness to bear fruit of edification to his disciples for ever. Thus does the wisdom of God in every eas out of evil derive good; and his judgments, no less than his more obvious mercies, minister to the increase of our faith and love!

The sentence of barrenness is pronounced by our Lord, when on his way from Bethany to Jerusalem. By the next morning the fig tree is "dried up from the roots." But in the meantime He had visited that city and people of the Jews, which was in like manner barren of good works, and alike devoted to destruction. There He taught the important lesson that the house of God is "the house of prayer;" casting out from the temple all those who frequented its sacred courts for any other purposes but those of devotion. Let us hence be warned against the sinfulness of attending divine service from any mere worldly motive, merely to please men, merely to do as our neighbours do. Much less let us ever resort thither with a view to meeting with our friends and neighbours, for worldly business, or for worldly talk. Much less let us, when there, buy or sell even in thought, transact even in imagination our ordinary work; but devote our whole attention in singleness of heart to the gains of godliness, to the enriching of our souls by the gifts of grace.

The lesson, which we are to learn from the fig tree being dried up, is nearly the same with this which is interposed in the midst of that miracle. It is the lesson of prayer. It is the lesson of faith in praying. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." It is the lesson also of forgiveness towards each other, when we pray to be forgiven ourselves. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Here, then, besides the careful exclusion of all other topics from our thoughts in prayer, we have also two chief points insisted on towards praying effectually; whether we pray in the temple, or in the closet, or in the congregation of an assembled family. First, we must pray with faith, not doubting in our hearts that God is able and willing to dry up the root of sinfulness within us; or to remove from us that burden of our iniquities, which, as a mountain is too heavy for us to bear. In the second place, whilst we pray for forgiveness, we must practise also to forgive. We must exercise towards the offences of our fellow creatures that mercy which we depend on in our own. In the daily intercourse of each family, many occasions are presented for the practice of this important duty. Many hasty words there are to be borne with meekness; many trifling wrongs to be requited with acts of unmerited and kind attention. In these cases it should be our constant endeavour to "overcome evil with good." Rom. 12. 21. Or if we have not the grace to do so at the time, let us at least, when we kneel down in prayer, cast away from us all remaining thought of bitterness. Thus will it be our joy to think that we are forwarding our present pardon, and promoting our hope of mercy in the day of the manifestation of God's mercy through Christ. Whilst, on the other hand, we have this infallible warning against harbouring a revengeful spirit, that if we do not forgive, neither will our Father which is in heaven forgive our trespasses.

Christ asketh of the Scribes one question.

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: 'and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of

men? answer me.

31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

¹ Matt. 21. 23.

|| Or, thing.

§ 154. *How we should inquire after the truth.*

The Jewish rulers were labouring under a notion that the Messiah was to be a kind of temporal prince, whose authority would supersede their own. This we must suppose to have been one main ground of their constant opposition to our Lord. But, in excuse of their unbelief, they raised doubts of his divine mission; and they now asked Him who gave Him his authority, as though they were not already aware that He professed to derive it from Almighty God. Our Lord replies by asking them also one question. And by attending to their reasons for not answering it, we shall see the real motives of their conduct, and may be warned against the influence of like motives in our own. "If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell." They did not, it seems, at all consider how they might answer this question truly; they did not, on being asked, take pains to learn whence the baptism of John did in reality come. The truth of a matter, which to know was of deep importance to their practice, this they did not care to inquire into. They weighed only how their answer would tell in the world. And they would fain have so framed it, as to give no ground for offence to the people, and no opening to Christ for a practical application.

This is the way in which the disputers of this world argue commonly; for victory, and not for truth. They consider, in their conversation, what will best shew off themselves, their own candour, talent, or civility; and care not any further for the result of their discussions, than their own reputation is concerned. And these are the two chief considerations which beset in all ages the faithless inquirer; who searches into the things of God, without honest purpose to obey his will. One while he considers, ere he adopts any doctrine proposed, what will the people think of it? what credit or discredit will he get in the world, by that devotion of his life to heavenly things, which he is inclined to suspect must be necessary? Or, in the second place, he calculates what sacrifice it will cost to his own corrupt nature; what duties he will have to perform, what self-denial to undergo, if he admits his baptism to be indeed from heaven, and to bind him to the actual fulfilment of all that the Gospel teaches, by no less an obligation than a covenant with God. These, it is true, are important considerations. And the more we are called upon to bear from others, and the more to deny within ourselves, the more carefully we may be allowed to inquire whether we have or have not followed "cunningly devised fables." 2 Pet. 1. 16. But in conducting that inquiry, we must proceed on the principles of reasonable conviction; only so much the more watchfully guarding against the risk of error, in proportion as we have here the more at stake. And we must both ask and answer, if we would have credit for honesty in our search, with no reference to the cost of our conclusion.

All such mean and ensnaring reflections let us resolutely discard from our minds, when we inquire of any proposed doctrine or duty, whether we shall admit it to be from heaven or not. Let us neither fear what the people will think of us, for the opinion we may ultimately form; nor heed what sacrifice of interest or convenience it may threaten in the result to cost us. Let us in honesty of purpose inquire only into this one great question, Is it the revealed will of God? This, if once we ascertain, as far as may be, by examination of Scripture with prayer, and by consulting our spiritual guides, with deference to the opinions of wise and good men, in all ages of the church; this, if once we ascertain of the thing we have in hand, after the use of all means of inquiry, that it is the will of God in Christ Jesus; then should we at once resolve to adopt it, as the rule of our lives. Then, whether it be a laborious duty, or a doctrine of ill repute in the estimation of the world, it is enough for us to be assured that it is the will of Him, who ordereth all things for the best, and who maketh all things, if we truly love Him, work together for our good. See Rom. 8. 28.

Make us, heavenly Father, to search for truth, with single purpose to obey thy will! Make us indifferent to the fear of men, but willing to defer to their enlightened judgment. Make us resolve to count all things but loss, even all we most love on earth, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. See Phil. 3. 8.

The parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen.

1 And ¹he began to speak unto them by parables. A *certain* man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a *place* for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3 And they caught *him*, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully handled

5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6 Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's.

8 And they took him, and killed *him*, and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10 And have ye not read this scripture; ²The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

¹ Matt. 21. 33.² Psalm 118. 22.§ 155. *That we should render unto God the fruit of righteousness.*

It was the object of our Lord, in many of the parables which have been recorded in the Gospels, to foreshew the rejecting of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. We may conclude, therefore, that these are matters well suited for our frequent consideration. And in the present instance, we may first observe how sufficiently the Almighty always furnishes mankind, for the service He requires at their hands. The vineyard represents the great blessing, and the many privileges, of a divine revelation, such as the Jews enjoyed. These were let out to them as to hire, entrusted to them on covenant, for certain fruits to be paid to the Almighty owner. They are furnished by his care with a hedge, a winefat, a tower; with all things necessary for the management and the security of the business committed to their charge. And it was "at the season," not till they were therefore able to pay, that they were required to make good their agreement. So true and righteous are God's dealings with mankind, under every dispensation! So equitably does He demand of us no more, and so graciously does He accept of us through Christ, far less, than He has Himself enabled us to pay!

In the conduct of the husbandmen we have faithfully represented both the behaviour of the Jews under the Law, and that to which Christians are tempted under the Gospel. As those wicked men slew the servants and the son, when sent unto them with a just demand, so the Jews also put to death their Messiah; and so do we transgress, whenever we would take the benefit of Gospel mercy, without fulfilling the precepts of Gospel righteousness. We may not enjoy the privileges of the vineyard, without paying the prescribed rent. We may not take hold of the offer of mercy, whilst we refuse to present in return the fruits of repentance and faith, in all reverence, and holiness, and love. We cannot secure to ourselves the benefits of God's revelation, whilst we neglect to perform the duties it enjoins. We cannot share the knowledge of his will, and the opportunity of grace to fulfil it, without becoming liable, if we fulfil it not, to be visited in his wrath with the greater condemnation. This did our Lord very plainly tell the Jews of their covenant; intimating not only that they should be rejected, but that the Gentiles should be invited to supply their place. The lord of the vineyard should give it unto others; and that, for this very object, as is added in St. Matthew's account of this parable, that they should "render him the fruits in their seasons." Matt. 21. 41.

Those others are the Gentiles; and of the Gentiles, so privileged, are we. As Christians, as members of the holy catholic Christian church, we have a vineyard let out to us for hire, abundantly furnished with all means and helps, for rendering unto God the fruits of righteousness. And must we not be aware, with the Jews, that Christ hath spoken this parable in some measure against us? Do we feel no suspicion that it applies to our too eager clinging to God's promised mercy, our too thrifty payment of the service He demands? Do we never feel disposed to encroach on his goodness; to sin, on the strength of the pardon promised, instead of being moved thereby from thankfulness to love, and from love to zeal and to obedience? If thus we do, if thus we seek in all to profit for ourselves, and in nothing to repay our Lord, let us be aware that He hath spoken against ourselves the parable we have now been considering. Oh, whilst thus He speaks to us, may we have the grace to hear! Never like those whom He thus first addressed, who "left him, and went their way," never may we turn from the words of his reproof, to the ways of our own selfishness and sin! Never may we hear without conviction! Never be convinced, without grace to repent! Never repent without faith, believe without obeying, or obey without love to persevere unto the end!

Christ answereth on the lawfulness of tribute.

13 ' And they sent unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he,

knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me. || a penny, that I may see it.

16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

¹ Matt. 22. 15.

|| Valuing of our money sevenpence halfpenny, as Matt. 18. 28.

§ 156. *How we must pay what is due both to Cæsar and to God.*

It was in order "to catch him in his words" that the Pharisees and the Herodians put this question to our Lord: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" For He could not fail to give offence, as they thought, by his reply, either to the people, if He allowed the lawfulness of the tribute, or to the Roman government, if He denied it. "Shall we give, or shall we not give?" say they; as though anxious to learn for their own information. "But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me?" How impious then, and not impious only, but utterly vain is any attempt to veil from his allseeing eye our inmost thoughts. He knew their hypocrisy. He knoweth, if there be in us any, He knoweth ours. He knoweth if in any thing we make a show of inquiring his will, with other purpose than to learn and do it. "Why tempt ye me?" is the answer we provoke, whenever we read his word without hearty affection, and sincere intention to fulfil what there we find. Or if we ask of Him in prayer, without longing for his grace, if we pray even for grace, without purpose to work with it to the uttermost ourselves, what other reply can we expect to our petitions, than the same words of sorrow and condemnation: "Why tempt ye me?" It is not only what our lips may utter, or what our eyes may read, no, nor even what our thoughts are dwelling on, but rather what our hearts are purposing to do; this is what, whilst we ask in prayer, He knoweth and chiefly noteth; and by this it is that He judgeth whether we ask in hypocrisy or in truth, whether we shall receive a blessing or a rebuke.

Besides exposing their hypocrisy, our Lord avoided also the snare of these Pharisees, by putting it to themselves to own that the tribute money was already in some sort Cæsar's; and then concluding with this counsel, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's." Which words well furnish us with a plain rule of conduct, in a duty which men are often tempted amongst themselves either indirectly to evade, or openly to violate. That each should pay his proper share of the public burdens, is here shewn to be a part of common honesty. These things are Cæsar's. They are the right of the government for the good of the community. And they should be paid to the chief magistrate of the state, who is invested with the power of receiving them, and whose very image on the coin we use is a sign of his acknowledged sovereignty; they should be paid to him as fully, as punctually, as cheerfully, as what is due from each man to his neighbour. Whom indeed but our neighbour do we defraud by any direct or indirect evasion of such rates, taxes, or duties, as are borne by the community at large? And how can one penny thus unfairly saved argue the less dishonesty in him who gains it, because the loss is divided amongst hundreds or even millions of his neighbours, than if by some more simple fraud or falsehood he had taken it from the pocket of only one?

And further, in this reply of our Lord, besides this instance of duty towards our neighbour, we are instructed also in one main branch of our duty to God. We are to "render unto God the things that are God's." This precept seems to apply more to what the Pharisees in secret thought, than to what they had openly asked. It was on pretence that their property was sacred to Jehovah, that they would have withheld their tribute from Cæsar; but in reality, it was in order to spend what was so saved on themselves. For on other occasions, and with like vain excuses, they were equally ready to withhold from God that tribute, which in the way of help to their parents, or alms to the poor, was strictly due to Him. Let us then be here warned in both particulars. And whilst we faithfully pay all men, and especially the government, their due, let us see that we bestow largely on the poor that which is God's, and which He hath bidden us to lay out in his name on them. This is God's portion, even all which we can properly afford to give, for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant. As lent unto Himself He graciously describes it. See Prov. 19. 17. But his, all the while, it really is. For what have we that we have not received? And his it will hereafter be shewn to be, when our Lord shall say to those who so bestow their goods: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25. 40.

Christ convinceth the Sadducees.

18 ¹ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave *his* wife *behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall

rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?

25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

¹ Matt. 22. 23.

§ 157. *How much we may here know of heaven.*

It appears from this passage that the Jews must have had, before our Saviour's time, some knowledge or notion of a resurrection; for else there could have been no Sadducees, to say "there is no resurrection." And it may help to confirm our dependance on that glorious consummation of our hopes, to reflect that it is a thing to which God's chosen people have looked forward in all ages of the world. Many indeed have also, in all ages, attempted to question its certainty. Having enjoyed perhaps their good things in this world, or being aware that they should hereafter have many bad actions to answer for, they have attempted to persuade others, or if not others, themselves, that no future resurrection can take place. As if any speculation of reason could avail, in a matter which no reason could discover; and which being once discovered to us by God, no reason can possibly gainsay! As if any one except Him who will raise us from the dead, could either at the first have intimated, or at the last plainly revealed to us, the certainty that we shall so be raised!

If, then, we should ever hear or meet with such objections, if we should ever be perplexed with the difficulty of conceiving how beings so weak and wicked as mankind, can inherit the pure joys of heaven, let us call to mind our Lord's answer in this place: "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?" Distrust in God's power, the power of Him, who made, as we own, the world we see, and ignorance of the Scriptures, which are his word, these are the two chief hindrances, to which we must refer the manifold difficulties of unbelief. Knowing this, let us in all our doubts both make ourselves better acquainted with God's word, and enliven our convictions of his power by considering that with Him "all things are possible." And in regard to the difficulty of the resurrection of the dead, let us remember what He hath here said of his faithful servants, that "when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven." In that blessed condition we must expect to exercise no love less large, no affections less pure, than those with which angels wait upon the Lord, and "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1. 14. That state cannot be judged of from our present faculties; though we know, that if we rightly use them, they will, in a measure, help us to attain it.

Nor is there any thing either in Scripture very plainly told us, as to what heaven actually is. Only we know, in some respects, what it is not. It is not a place where the wicked prosper. It is not a place where sin can enter. There will be no tears, no pain, no sorrow. And the happiness there to be experienced will not consist in such pleasures as here we meet with, or be abated with such alloy of imperfection as here mars the very best we can possess. Thus much we may know certainly of what heaven is not. But what it really is we must wait to know; we must wait until, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, we shall be taken into the bright presence of God most high. And meantime we should greatly err in requiring as a necessary part of that felicity the renewal of our earthly connexions, or supposing that these could add to the satisfaction which the divine presence can alone inspire. Our affection we are sure to retain. For charity which is love, "never faileth." 1 Cor. 13. 8. But how we shall then feel it, is no where revealed. And it is enough for us to know, that in any case our happiness will be as great, as a Father who is Almighty can confer on children forgiven and accepted, through merits infinite, and mercy everlasting. Let us then not so much inquire what heaven is, as search how we may best secure its enjoyment. Let us here aim to love God above all our relatives, and to love all men as ourselves. That so we may hereafter more readily love Him only, or love with Him, alike truly and affectionately, all whom we shall then behold.

Christ answereth one of the scribes.

¹ 28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31 And the second is like, *namely this*. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other

commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

¹ Matt. 22. 35.

§ 158. *The love of God and of our neighbour.*

The answer of our Lord to the scribe sets before us, as the two chief rules of our conduct, the love of God and the love of man. And these, we are to understand, not as set above all other commandments, but rather as including them. All are in this sense the first or the second, that they belong either to the first or second here laid down. We are to fix uppermost in our thoughts a due sense of Almighty God, as the Father creating us, as the Son redeeming us, as the Holy Ghost making us holy. Thus regarding Him, we are to love Him, as He first loved us; and for his sake, and according to his word, we are to love heartily all our fellow creatures. And then shall we need no further information, as to which commandment is first, or which last, when we feel no less in earnest anxieties, than we are most deeply bound, to fulfil them all.

Are we then elsewhere bidden to have no other gods than one? It is enough that we would not wish to have any other, for we love the one we have. Are we bidden to bow down before no image? It is enough that we love God who is a Spirit; and we shall need no image to help our devotions. Are we forbidden to take his name in vain? Nay, we delight to reverence it; for we love Him whose name it is. Are we forbidden on the sabbath day to do any manner of work? Nay more, we shall choose of ourselves, whilst we rest from labour, to labour in prayer and praise; for we love Him whose day it is; we love his day, we love his worship. And in like manner of our duties towards each other, of children to parents, of parents to children, of a humane regard to the life and health and welfare of our brethren, of purity in all our words and works, of truth, both in our solemn testimony, and in our ordinary talk, and of not coveting, much less taking to ourselves, any thing that is our neighbour's; in all these things, if we but love our neighbour as ourselves, if we but do unto him as we would he should do unto us, we shall do all that God would have us do, all that He hath commanded to be done. Whatever sin besets us, whatever action we have to perform of self-denial, or diligence, or benevolent exertion; we have only to consider which way should I best please God, or which way would I most wish my neighbour, in like case, to do unto me? And for this we need no more than sincerely to love. And thus "love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13. 10. Love makes humble, instead of haughty; kind instead of selfish; free to give, as we have freely received; and ready to forgive, as we have been ourselves forgiven. Love makes us not look to the letter of the law, but inclines us to adopt its spirit; to bear, if possible, more than we are required; to do, if practicable, more than we are commanded. Love makes equal the widow's mite, and the rich man's golden talent. Love puts upon a par the poor man's labour, with the great man's office, and the wise man's words. Love lifts up the prayer of the penitent and the devout, however low their station, however small their means, above "all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And to this the scribe here mentioned appears to have assented. And for so assenting, he was pronounced by our Lord to be "not far from the kingdom of God." So great is the privilege to know the truth! so near does this knowledge bring us to the gates of the city of salvation! Only let us remember, that to be near and then to fall short, to be not far off, and yet never to reach unto holiness and heaven, this will but aggravate our regret, this will but increase our condemnation. To assent is one thing; to adopt the truth, to love it, and to live it, is another. To assent without love, to know without believing, to answer discreetly without obeying entirely, these things do no more than make us "not far from the kingdom of God." To be in it we must do, as well as learn our duty, we must keep the commandments we assent to. We must love God, and we must love our neighbour. We must love "God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength." We must love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

God help us to love Him as He hath loved us! God help us to love each other as our own flesh! See Isaiah 58. 7. God make our love to be "without dissimulation;" that we may "abhor," as well as avoid, "that which is evil;" that we may not do only, but "cleave to that which is good;" that we may in honour prefer "one another," distribute to the necessity of the saints, "bless them which persecute" us, "live peaceably with all men," "avenge not" ourselves, and "overcome evil with good." Rom. 12. 9—21.

Christ refuteth the scribes, and commendeth the widow's mites.

35 ¹ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? tence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, ² Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40 ³ Which devour widows' houses, and for a pre-

41 ⁴ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast [†] money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two [†] mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44 For [†] they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

¹ Matt. 22. 41.

² Matt. 23. 5.

³ Matt. 23. 14.

⁴ Luke 21. 1.

[†] A piece of brass money: See Matt. 10. 9.

[†] It is the seventh part of one piece of that brass money.

§ 159. *The conduct valued by the inward disposition.*

The question of our Lord, how Christ could be the son of David, appears to have greatly perplexed the scribes. Meanwhile "the common people heard him gladly." This may mean that they were glad, as is too often the case, to see those who were above them put to shame. Or rather we should interpret it of the ease and joy, with which they apprehended the mystery here revealed. For thus do many amongst the multitude understand, to their comfort, what to the more learned is full of perplexity; and this is, wherever learning is obscured by pride, and its absence is supplied by zeal and humility. Where these qualities abound, there no doctrine, out of all that are helpful to salvation, is above the reach of the most plain understanding. We see often how readily the unlearned apprehend matters much more obscure than Gospel truth, where their interest or livelihood is concerned. Let us, then, never give up a difficulty in religion, as too hard for us either to learn or practise, till we have called to mind how much we have at stake, in knowing, and doing, the will of Christ. David's Son He was after the flesh; David's Lord after his divine nature. Wherein we see, both that Christ was man, and also that Christ was God; as man, able to die for our sins, and as God, able to make atonement for them.

As in the last question the learning of the scribes was put to shame, so in the words following, their hypocrisy is condemned. Jesus warns the people to beware of them, on the ground of their pretending to be devout, whilst their conduct was full of iniquity. The wearing "long clothing" they meant for a sign of gravity and dignity. The "salutations in the marketplace" they loved to give as a display of their courtesy, to receive as a token of their estimation. They sought "the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts," as a manifestation of their rank and importance. And all the while they scrupled not to devour widows' houses. They imposed on the most forlorn of their fellow creatures. They oppressed those who could least help themselves. "And for a pretence," by way of screening their injustice, they used to "make long prayers;" they used purposely to make a show of their public devotions. These, adds our Lord, "these shall receive the greater damnation." Let all, therefore, who are tempted to take unfair advantage of such as are least able to defend themselves, remember, that God "is a father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows." Psalm 68. 5. If they thus, however secretly, transgress, no prayers they may utter can otherwise avail, than to increase their condemnation for ever. The longer they pray, and the more in public, the more do they aggravate their concealed sins before Him, who seeth each action of their hands, each thought of their minds, each purpose of their hearts.

That the quality of our actions, as viewed by God, depends mainly on the inward disposition in ourselves, we have further assurance in the praise our Lord here bestowed on the contribution of a widow to the treasury. This was a fund appropriated to sacred uses. And whilst "many that were rich cast in much," "there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing." This was an amount in itself most trifling. And to ordinary beholders it would seem to be scarce better than mockery. But over against the treasury there sat at that time One who was aware that it was "all that she had, even all her living." And He knew, therefore, that it argued in her the greater disposition to give. And truly might He in this sense say of her: "This poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury." And graciously will He repeat that saying, pronounce that praise on the very poorest of us, in proportion as we approach to the pattern of this widow, and are willing, in any works of almsgiving or love, to cast in even all that we have.

Christ prophesieth the destruction of the temple.

1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!

2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in

divers places; and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

¹ Matt. 24. 1.

² Matt. 24. 3.

|| The word in the original importeth the pains of a woman in travail.

³ Matt. 10. 19.

§ 160. *Christian encouragement in times of trouble.*

At the sight of the temple the disciples express their admiration at the great stones and buildings. They thought, perhaps, that it would be as a palace for their Master when He should establish the kingdom they were looking for on earth. Jesus, in his answer, leads them to look for his reign elsewhere; and teaches the transitory nature of this world's grandeur, by assuring them that of the buildings they admired there should not be left "one stone upon another" that should not be cast down. Nor does He speak this with any of the same concern which He elsewhere manifested for the rejection of the Jews. So much more grievous a sight to Him is a lost soul than a fallen temple! And in proportion as we are like to Him, so much less, even in God's house, should we care for the size and splendour of the buildings, than for the truths and spirit of the service there performed! Let us learn hence, that of all adorning of churches, devotion in our worship is the best! Let us reflect how perishable are all outward helps, not of worship only, but of all earthly state and greatness! And let us so much the more study to prepare ourselves for the enjoyment of a building of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

To the question of the disciples put privately, as in confidence, "When shall these things be?" our Lord replies, not by revealing the time, but by teaching how to prepare for its arrival. Hence we learn that we ought never to consult his word for the gratification of an idle curiosity; but for the improvement of our hearts, for the direction of our conduct. How long this world may last, or how soon it may come to an end, what matters this to us, compared with how we may best abide that end whenever it arrives, how best be fitted to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. This then let us inquire of Him sincerely, and we may be sure He will vouchsafe us a gracious answer.

Thus from the instructions here given to the apostles, for their use in times of persecution, we may derive, amongst other lessons, applicable to all times, the two following of great practical importance. First, it appears here, that the Gospel does not propose to afford us undisturbed peace in this present world. It rather leads us to expect, as the consequence of our faithful services, the opposition, and even the hatred, of those amongst whom we live. Let not us therefore, if such treatment should ever be our lot, let not us be there by disheartened. Let us consider rather, that it is no more than our blessed Lord hath plainly warned us of beforehand. The very worst that can in this way befall us is a proof of his truth, and of the Gospel's. For it will not be worse than He foretold to his disciples, and through them to their followers for ever, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."

And, secondly, let us here note, that in the midst of these unwelcome tidings there shines forth this consolatory assurance: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Let us look then in all our troubles, let us look to the end. Let us consider both how soon it comes, and how great is the joy that comes with it. "The same shall be saved." He shall be saved from sin and death, shall partake with Christ of everlasting glory. Sad it is to hear of wars; but joyful is the rumour of their coming, if after them comes peace with God through Christ. Awful is the thought of famine or earthquake. But easy will be the shock, and short the pangs, that end in eating of the tree of life, and resting on the Rock of ages. See Isai. 26. 4. * Willing we should be to lie in prison, if God will there make us free; and glad to be hated of all men if we may thereby be blessed with his love!

Christ admonisheth the disciples how to act in their troubles.

14 ¹ But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take any thing out of his house:

16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

¹ Matt. 24. 15.

19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21 ² And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, *he is* there; believe *him* not:

22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were* possible, even the elect.

23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

² Matt. 24. 23.

§ 161. *Further directions in circumstances of difficulty.*

As Jerusalem was a city whose calamities were in some sort a figure of those which should afterwards befall the Christian church; so the afflictions with which the Jews were visited represent those which will be dispensed to Christians until the end of time. And in our similar circumstances of difficulty and trial, we may profitably apply to our own conduct the directions here given to the disciples. Thus, from the instructions as to what they should do, when the prophecy of Daniel was visibly fulfilled, we learn the duty of studying the prophetic Scriptures, and comparing them with the signs of the times. And as we would not presumptuously pry into that which God has concealed of the future; so neither should we overlook the proofs of his foreknowledge, in what is daily taking place around us, nor the hints which we might hence derive for our behaviour, in any particular case or season.

Next let us here observe the warnings against turning back, when the time for flight should have arrived. Let us apply them to our prescribed flight from sin, our fleeing from the wrath to come. If we be as on the house top, a post which, from the construction of the houses in the east, might be favourable to speedy flight, if we be advanced in holiness, eminent already in God's good gifts of grace; let us not go down to take any thing out of the house, let us not, by any looking after or longing for the satisfactions of our earthly tabernacle, retard our escape to the mountains of salvation. And in like manner let us pray that our heavenward flight be not in the winter, may not happen in the season of old age; that we may not put off our repentance and faith, till that time of life when the days are shortest, and the ways are worst, the hindrances of travelling most numerous, and the night comes on before we are aware. For then, if we were overtaken by the approach of death, or by the coming of Christ to judgment, then should we have affliction to encounter such as in no other instance we could experience, from the beginning unto the end of our days. Then should we become sensible of the necessity of repentance, and yet feel it to be too late to repent; convinced of sin, when the time of pardon is no more; and most anxiously concerned to obey, when the night is come wherein no man can work.

And now note, in the assurance that the days of suffering shall be shortened for the sake of the elect, note how great is the gain of godliness, not only to the godly themselves, but to all who dwell with them in the same family, the same city, the same world. So closely are we connected with each other in our various social relations; so manifold are the influences of our words and works on the principles and practice of each other! No man can sin without communicating to his neighbours some risk, if not certainty of harm. Whilst, on the other hand, the obedience of the faithful, our election, if we, in our faith and obedience, are according to God's purpose elect, draws down, from our Father which is in heaven, a blessing on all them that dwell around us.

And lastly, by what is here said of false Christs and false prophets, let us be warned against the delusion of the many false religions, which are spread abroad amongst mankind under the authority of Christ's name. "Behold, I have foretold you all things," is our rule. Let us abide by what our Saviour hath set down in his word. Therein beforehand He hath told us all things, all things necessary for us to know; so that "whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Article 6.) "To the law and to the testimony," Isa. 8. 20; to this touchstone of truth, let us bring all strange doctrines that beguile the world, and we shall know readily the pretended from the real prophets, the false Christs from the true One.

Lord, teach us in thy word to look for Thee! Lord, help us, in the study of thy prophets and apostles, to discern thy wisdom, and our own salvation! Guide us by thy Holy Spirit, guide us into all truth! Make us to fly when it is the time for flight, and to stand when it is a duty to resist. Count us, for thine own sake, elect; and shorten, for thine elect's sake, the days when there should else no flesh be saved!

Christ telleth of his second coming, commandeth to watch.

24 'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree : When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near :

29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall

not pass, till all these things be done.

31 Heaven and earth shall pass away : but my words shall not pass away.

32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

33 'Take ye heed, watch and pray : for ye know not when the time is.

34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye therefore : for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockerowing, or in the morning :

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

¹ Matt. 24. 29.

² Matt. 24. 42.

§ 162. *That we must watch for our Lord's coming.*

The previous instructions in this chapter we have considered partly as addressed to the early disciples to prepare them for their approaching troubles, and partly as applicable to our own preparation for the coming of Christ to judgment. To this latter object these concluding verses more clearly if not exclusively refer. We are warned of a period when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." The outward world on which now our senses rest with confidence, will in an instant cease to be. The greater light will be no longer seen to rule the day, nor the lesser light to rule the night. The stars also, which we hold to be so bright, so great, so distant, so signal a proof of the power of Him who made them, "the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken."

In that hour of universal desolation, in that hour of shame and confusion of face to every impenitent offender, one object, and one only, shall engross the attention of mankind. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." And the end for which He will then come is to gather together his elect; to take unto Himself all those who, having been chosen to enjoy the knowledge of his truth, have in proportion to their knowledge obeyed and loved it. Let us endeavour to feel an interest in his coming, worthy of the great blessings He has in store for them that love their Lord. Let us behold in each tree which "putteth forth leaves," whence we know "that summer is near," a token that in like manner, as time goes on, and as the prophecies of our Lord are gradually fulfilled, "it is nigh," the great day He foretold is nigh, "even at the doors." And when we behold the sun, and moon, and stars, let us bethink ourselves how soon their glory shall decay; let us consider of the brightness we admire, how utterly dark it will become, when the Sun of righteousness shall again arise, when Christ shall come to judge the world.

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." There is a sense in which the Son is "inferior to the Father, as touching" namely "his manhood." (Athanasian Creed.) There is a sense in which the Son Himself doth not know the hour of future judgment. How then shall man think to ascertain it? And why should we be curious to know the hour, instead of careful to be prepared for it whenever it may arrive? To "take heed, watch, and pray," this is our wisdom; these are the duties which most plainly follow from our knowing not "when the time is." Duties they are which we grievously neglect; but which we should be much more tempted to overlook, if we knew the day of our Lord's coming. For now that we know not when it is, we can never feel safe from its arrival. Never therefore can it be safe to cease from prayer. Never can it be safe to leave off watching. Never can it be safe to sin.

We are set as porters at a door, and our commandment is given us to watch. Our Master is "as a man taking a far journey." He has left his house. We see not in this world his glorious presence. We speak as if He were not near to hear. We act, and think, as if He were not immediately beholding our works, and wishes, and intentions. Of his coming, of his being made manifest to our sense, we know not when it will be. Only this much we may from many signs conclude, that "it is nigh, even at the doors." "Watch ye therefore." Watch, for this very reason, that "ye know not when the master of the house cometh." Watch against this very thing, "lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." Watch daily, as in the morning light the stars are seen to disappear; watch, for how know you that they shall shine again; and what will be your feelings when they fall? Watch, daily, as the sun goes down. How know you that you will see his light return? And how would you venture to be sinfully asleep, that night when the sun shall set never to rise again?

Christ is anointed by a woman ; is betrayed by Judas.

1 ¹ After two days was *the feast of the passover*, and of *unleavened bread*: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put *him* to death.

2 But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar of the people.

3 ² And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of *spikenard* very precious; and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head.

4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred *†* pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

8 She ~~hath~~ done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

10 ² And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

11 And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

¹ Matt. 26. 2.² Matt. 26. 6.|| Or, *pure nard*, or *liquid nard*.

† See Matt. 18. 28.

² Matt. 26. 14.§ 163. *That we must do, in Christ's service, what we can.*

This most solemn of all their festivals was the last occasion, on which we might have expected that the Jewish rulers would have compassed the death of Christ. And they were indeed reluctant to have Him taken at that time. "They said, not on the feast day." But why? Not by reason of the sinfulness of what they designed. Not for fear of aggravating their sin before God. But for fear of men; "lest there be an uproar of the people." How much also of our deference, for things sacred, and for sacred days, might we trace, if we were to look well into our hearts, rather to a respect for man's opinion, than to a reverence for Almighty God! How often, when we say of any projected amusement or work, Not on the Sabbath, not on the Lord's day must it be done; how often is this said, and the day observed, rather for our character or example's sake, than out of our desire to obey our Lord! As if it mattered what men think of us, compared with how God esteems us! As if in any thing we were more bound to set an example to others, than in the same thing to edify ourselves!

Whilst the enemies of our Lord were seeking "how they might take him by craft," it occurred to one of his devout followers to do an act in preparation for his approaching death. "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." Such was the kind construction put by Jesus, on what might else have seemed an instance of inconsiderate waste. "There came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head." This was a custom of the rich in that age, and in many countries, to use ointments of great value in profusion. It was a part of their luxurious living; and was reckoned to be at once an ornament of the body, and one of the chiefest delights of the sense. How wisely did this woman prefer to spend what was thus precious in the honouring of Christ! How well may we learn from her breaking of the box, and pouring it out all on his head, to spare in the service of our Lord no cost however great, no offering however valuable! How gladly should we refrain from spending on ourselves what we might better give as unto Him! and break, or burn, or otherwise destroy, rather than part with to the detriment of others, all such helps, as are lewd books and pictures, profane devices, and wicked stimulants, to vain luxury or to pleasurable sin!

"She hath done what she could," is the praise here given to this woman by our Lord. Let us hence learn that it is expected also of us to do what we can. Whatever be our information, opportunities, or abilities, we are bound to make the most of them in the service of Christ. If we can no longer anoint his body to the burying, if we have not the means to spend upon the poor who are in his stead, that which is precious in kind, or of large value in amount; we may surely find some luxury or comfort that we can ill afford to spare, and which we may thus spare with the better grace for his sake. Whilst the lovers of pleasure, and the lovers of money, are engaged with Judas in the guilty attempt to betray their Lord "conveniently;" whilst they seek to get for themselves as much, and to give to others as little as they may of this world's good things; let us do what we can, and desire to do more than we can, towards honouring of Christ, by ministering to the poor. Blessed be his name that He doth never require of us more than we might always do! Sufficient will it be for our eternal joy, if He shall say of the very poorest and most unworthy of us all, "She hath done what she could." The little which the very best of us can do, the unprofitable service we can at the utmost offer, He will, if we do it in earnest, honestly for the best, He will count it for more than we humbly think for; and reward it with the praise which it does in no wise deserve.

Christ eateth the passover, and ordaineth his supper.

12 ¹ And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

18 ² And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall

betray me.

19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

20 And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dipperth with me in the dish.

21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

22 ³ And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

¹ Matt. 26. 17.

|| Or, sacrificed.

² Matt. 26. 20.

³ Matt. 26. 26.

§ 164. *How God suffereth evil, and how we should enjoy his good gifts.*

We have many instances to prove that our blessed Lord knew all things, future as well as present, distant as well as near. And in pointing out where He would eat the passover with his disciples, He gives here, in a very striking manner, this evidence of his divine foreknowledge. That the disciples should meet a particular man in the city, that he should be bearing a pitcher of water, that he should be able to accommodate them with a large upper room; these, it must be owned, are trifling circumstances. And yet, in the innumerable contingencies of the world, no wisdom less than God's could tell, that just these would just then happen. And in the allowed exercise of human choice, no other power than divine could compass, that they should all then of a certainty take place. "And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them." So is it in each least thing we do; God knoweth it beforehand. And hereafter we shall find, if we do it as He hath told us, we shall find as He hath said unto us, that we shall in no wise lose our reward. See chap. 10. 42.

"And they made ready the passover." In the midst of this solemn feast their Lord announced to them the sad intelligence, "One of you which eateth with me shall betray me." And then, to relieve the anxiety He had thus raised in the others, He pointed out Judas by the sign of his dipping at the same time with Himself into the dish. And at first it may seem strange, that our Lord, knowing his evil intentions, should suffer him to dip in the same dish, and partake of the same feast; or should have used his services as an apostle at all. But herein we should rather observe with reverence, how God often bears with evil for the sake of good. Thus He puts up with human frailty in the ministers of his true religion. And having settled to make use of such earthen vessels, in the establishment or continuance of his Gospel, He alters not their common nature. He suffers amongst his bishops, priests, and deacons, that some should very grievously offend; as He suffered the apostles to be often in error, and sometimes, no doubt, all of them in sin; and as He also suffered this one of them to become the betrayer of his Lord. Acquiescing in this divine dispensation, let us not expect in the ministers of the Gospel more than their due share of Christian grace. Let us never in them be scandalized at their proportionate degree of human frailty. Let us be content in the due evidence of their outward appointment, to leave the rest to Him who seeth the heart. The inward grace is what we can never truly estimate. And if we could, we may here see in Judas, that this was not in every instance a necessary qualification for discharging, to some useful purpose, even the more sacred office of an apostle.

Towards the close of their eating the passover, we find the institution of the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. This latter feast was not given to the apostles till they had received their natural food. Whence we may justly conclude for ourselves, that it is designed for the replenishing of our spiritual hunger and thirst. And as Christ declared at the end of it that He would "drink no more of the fruit of the vine," until the day when He should "drink it new in the kingdom of God;" so should the partaking of these heavenly mysteries give us also a distaste, in the comparison, for all worldly and carnal satisfactions. Never then let us abuse, to the purposes of intemperance, that fruit of the vine, which we have once drunk of as his blood, in remembrance of our Lord! Never let us eat in greediness, or waste in selfish luxury, that bread which we have once taken of and eaten as his body! But whether we eat, or drink; whether it be bread, or wine, or any other of God's good gifts, that we enjoy; let us do all to the glory of God, let us enjoy all with a view to the enjoyment of Christ's blessed presence in heaven! See 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Christ prayeth in Gethsemane.

26 And when they had sung an || hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

27 ¹ And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

29 ² But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet *will* not I.

30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

32 ³ And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding

sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I ⁴will, but what thou wilt.

37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?

38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak.

39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest, it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

|| Or, *psalm*.

¹ Matt. 26. 31.

² Matt. 26. 33.

³ Matt. 26. 36.

§ 165. *That in our weakness we should be humble and watchful.*

When Christ warned his disciples that one of them should betray Him, they asked with concern, "Lord, is it I?" v. 19. When afterwards informed of a less heinous offence, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," they are ready to join with Peter in saying, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." In the result we may plainly see, how much better against the hour of trial, is a humble distrust of our resolution, than a presumptuous security in our strength. However heinous be the sin we are informed of, far be it from us to venture to declare, that we shall never so dishonour our Saviour Christ. When the oath of the swearer bursts upon our ears, when the drunkard meets us in the way, when the adulterer is exposed to public shame, when the felon is led forth to execution; far be it from us to profess unto our Lord, I will never so deny Thee. Rather let us say, each within himself, Have not I, in proportion to my light and knowledge, been guilty of no less grievous sins? Am not I still in danger of so sinning? And is it not by grace alone that I can stand? And what grace can I expect without humility of heart?

Sad was the proof of what our weakness is, and fearful the evidence of what agony sin may make us to endure, as shewn forth by the sufferings of the blessed Jesus in the "place which was named Gethsemane." It was as man that He "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy." It was as man that He "saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." It was the taste of our sins which made that cup so bitter, that hour so full of horror, and that willing Saviour so intent to pray, that they might, if it were possible, pass from Him. Oh how should it embitter to us the taste of sinful pleasure, to hear Him pray against our cup of woe! Oh how should it convince us of our dependance upon God, to see our Saviour falling on the ground, offering up supplications "with strong crying and tears," Heb. 5. 7; and owning of Himself, as of his disciples, "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

And joyful we may be to think, that as in his own pure nature He could not possibly have been liable to such agony, so does it necessarily follow that He bare all this for us, and for our salvation. Yet must we not also be ashamed to reflect, how truly our own indifference to so great mercy is represented by the case of the disciples, who could not watch with Him even a single hour? Only the brief duration of this transitory life does our Saviour demand our service. And that service may be truly described to be no more, than that we should watch with Him. He goes forward, and prays for us. He contends for us, and prevails over sin and death. He bears the main weight of the contest. He supplies the main strength for the victory. Only He asks of us that we meantime watch; that we should ourselves be awake unto righteousness; that we should feel a lively interest in his blessed work, devote ourselves to follow in his steps, and watch and pray that we be not tempted to the sleep of sin. Oh how easy is his yoke through grace to bear; and his burden how light, through watchfulness to support! Oh, how deep must be our shame and confusion of face, if we deserve, as we do often, for our spiritual sloth, to hear from his lips the affectionate reproof: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"

Christ is taken ; is forsaken by the disciples.

43 ¹ And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he ; take him, and lead him away safely.

45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straight-way to him, and saith, Master, master ; and kissed him.

46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword,

and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me ?

49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not : but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body ; and the young men laid hold on him ;

52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

¹ Matt. 26. 47.

§ 166. *How we may follow Christ unto the end.*

Which shall we count the worst of our Lord's enemies, the multitude who came against Him " with swords and staves," or Judas, who had " given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he ?" Which sin shall we most abominate in ourselves ; the wrath which assaults with violence, or the malice that flatters only to betray ? Far be from us the traitor's treason ? Far be from us the people's rage ! Far be from us alike the love of strife, the stain of falsehood, or the guilt of blood ! Never may we follow the multitude to do evil ! Never may we with our lips draw near to Christ, whilst our hearts are all the while far from Him ! Never may we say, Master, Master, and do not the things He hath commanded !

" And they laid their hands on him, and took him." In this emergency " one of them that stood by" thought to defend his Master by dint of bloodshedding. He " drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear." Whilst Jesus, instead of resisting them by force, meekly reasoned with them that such force as they applied was needless : " I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not ;" meaning that they might have taken Him easily at any time without violence. Here we see how we might best meet force with meekness ; how turn away wrath with a soft answer. Who might not better thus reason gently with a brother that offends, than either rebuke him sharply, or obstinately resist him ? And who that has in him " the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus," who would not rather offer to the midnight robber, his wealth or life with resignation, than draw the sword in their defence ; than spend, in striving unto blood, those moments, which either to himself or his assailant may probably be the last that will be granted, for prayer and repentance before God ?

" And they all forsook him, and fled." All ; even they all, who so lately had agreed to declare, " If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." All ; even he also, who in the vehemence of his zeal had drawn a sword in his Master's defence. So often will men fight for their religion, who notwithstanding refuse to suffer for it ! So ready are they, in their pride or anger, to draw the sword of war or controversy ! So slow to abide, in the hour of trial, the scorn of the haughty, or the triumph of the great ! They follow Christ as far as their own passions are inclined, as far as their own credit for courage or consistency may be thereby upheld in the world. But they follow not unto disgrace. They follow not unto bonds. They follow not to the cross, to the patient endurance of mockery, and stripes, and death. They follow, as did the young man here mentioned, who continued till the officers would have seized him ; and then left the linen cloth they held by, and, rather than not escape, " fled from them naked." So do many follow Christ up to risk of inconvenience ; and then turn and fly, at all risk of shame.

How then may we better love our Redeemer ? how follow Him to our own eternal honour, now that neither our life nor our credit is endangered by the service He requires ? Let us be ready in spirit to lay down either, or both, at his feet. Let us go on where others stop, go with Him when others fly ; counting ourselves there only to begin to follow, where we find the path narrow, and the gateway strait. Let us sacrifice, what to many is dearer than life, our own pleasure, our own inclination, our pride, our lusts, our evil thoughts, our wanton or idle words. Let us encounter, when it so happens, for his sake, even the displeasure of those we love, and the loss of their accustomed esteem, rather than do what we should be ashamed to own to God, what will make us naked in his sight hereafter.

The Lord, in his mercy, incline our hearts to follow Himself unto the end ; to fear no shame but his reproof ; no ill will, but his displeasure. The Lord make us meek to answer when assailed ; and slow to strike when smitten ; averse to flatter, faithful to defend, and only afraid to sin !

Christ is condemned by the council of the Jews.

53 ¹ And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

55 ² And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.

56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together..

57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee?

61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

¹ Matt. 26. 57.

² Matt. 26. 59.

³ Matt. 24. 30.

§ 167. *How we are in danger of dishonouring our Lord.*

We have here an account of the trial and condemnation of Jesus by the high priest and assembled council. Wherein we may first observe how eminently sinful it must be to bear false witness; seeing that this was a chief means by which the sentence against our Lord was brought to pass. True it is of all sin, that it lays on us, according to its degree, according to how much we know, and how little we do, of our Christian duty, the guilt of compassing the death of Christ. And here this is most obvious of false witness. Let us therefore, with redoubled watchfulness, refrain our lips from evil, and our tongue that it speak no guile. See Psalm 34. 13. Henceforth let us be more than ever on our guard, that we neither invent nor repeat the slightest misrepresentation of the actions and motives of our neighbours; that when called upon to give evidence, we tell of them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and when speaking of them in our common conversation, we detract not in jealousy aught from their good qualities, nor aggravate their failings to extenuate our own.

Secondly, it is to be observed in this account, how entirely our Lord's innocence is made manifest in all that the false witnesses laid to his charge. This was needful to satisfy us that He died not for any offence He had himself committed, but only for our sins; only for us men, and for our salvation. And it should greatly help to support our patience under the burden of a false charge or imputation, when we see how Jesus "held his peace, and answered nothing," how "when he was reviled," He "reviled not again," 1 Pet. 2. 23; how when "many bare false witness against him," and "their witness agreed not together," He endured in silence and submission "such contradiction of sinners against himself." Heb. 12. 3.

Thirdly, we have here our Lord's own testimony that He was "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." "Jesus said, I am." These were the very words, the very name by which God had in the Old Testament described Himself. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Exod. 3. 14. To this assertion that He was the Christ, and this probable intimation that He was at the same time God, He adds, "and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Whilst then we consider our Lord as the spotless sacrifice offered once for sin, let us at the same time regard Him as the God who will hereafter bring sinners to judgment. He died for our salvation, for the saving us from sin and death. He liveth also, He liveth for ever, to call us to account for our transgressions of his will: "I am," saith He, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. 1. 18.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds;" even He who stood silent before the council, He who was of them despised, and they esteemed Him not. "Behold, he cometh with clouds," as it is written in those last Revelations which He has been pleased to grant unto his church, "and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him," Rev. 1. 7; even they also who "began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him." Oh, let us now take earnest heed, that by our sins we pierce Him not! Oh, let us now watch, lest whilst we pray unto Him and praise Him with our lips, our lives do, as it were, buffet Him with indignity, and cover his face from regarding us with love! For what is it short of mockery and contempt, first to know and to own Him for the Christ, and then wilfully, and perversely, and notoriously, to violate his precepts, to do despite unto his grace, and to reject his counsel for the saving of the soul?

Christ is thrice denied of Peter.

66 ¹ And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:

67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them.

¹ Matt. 26. 69.

² Matt. 26. 75.

70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth *thereto*.

71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

72 ² And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crew twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. ¶ And when he thought thereon, he wept.

¶ Or, he wept abundantly, or, he began to weep.

§ 168. *How the sin of Peter was suggested, persisted in, and repented of.*

The behaviour of St. Peter, here so faithfully recorded by his constant companion St. Mark, may be considered as a warning to all Christians of the perils and progress of falsehood. For who is there that dare reckon himself to be safe, when so grievous a fall is set down, against one to whom our Lord had previously declared, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona?" Matt. 16. 17. And what avail these records of shame and sin, published against God's most faithful servants, if they move not us in our less fervent zeal to renewed humility and watchfulness? Think we that for any less gracious purpose, the good Shepherd and Bishop of our souls would have suffered the frailties of his saints to remain on the page of inspiration; encountering the scoffer's laugh, and risking the scandal of the weaker brethren? No; it is that we might hence derive ever fresh conviction of our own infirmity; turn ever with fresh prayer and praise to Him for help divine; own firmly of ourselves in common that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one;" Ps. 14. 2; and profess devoutly to Him alone: "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Rev. 15. 3.

And now note how this untruth of St. Peter's was prompted by fear, was persisted in with hardihood, and was at length repented of with tears. He was afraid to own that he had been with Jesus of Nazareth, lest he should be called before the council to account for it. He was afraid to own that he knew his Lord, that Lord who had called him by the name of friend. See John 15. 15. Let us learn how near falsehood is to fear. Let us never be afraid, when our friends are in trouble or disgrace, to acknowledge, as we hear their censure spoken, that we also have been with them. To be silent is, in such a case, to deceive. It allows, perhaps tempts, the speaker, to go on with charges, which our testimony might be able to refute. It is not doing as we would be done by. It is deceiving, because we are afraid. It is being afraid, because we love not.

But further see the progress of deceit. See how this apostle was led on from one falsehood to another. To the denial of his having been one of the followers of Christ, he adds of his own accord the assertion, that he knew not, neither understood what was said. He added further, by way of beguiling them that stood by, that He even knew not the man of whom they spake. Thus did he persist in hardihood, in the hope of covering one sin by another; in the necessity, so peculiar to the practice of untruth, of sinning in order to be thought sincere.

Well was it, for his profitable conviction of sin, that he heard at length that repeated sound, by which our Lord would have him warned of his transgression. Let us for our warning ever imagine, when we are tempted to deny the thing that is, or to say the thing that is not, let us imagine that with Peter we hear the cock crew twice; let us with Peter call to mind the words of Christ; let us with Peter go out, and weep. We think, perhaps, that such sorrow is easy of attainment. We are tempted, perhaps, as many are, to go on in sin, under the notion that we may think better of it hereafter, when we choose; and may weep, when we have a mind, in penitence and prayer. But let us consider, ere we settle on a ground so vain, to delay a reform so needful, let us consider, out of the many instances of deceit we have ever practised or designed, let us count up of the many sins we have committed in the presence of Almighty God, let us count up how many, as far as He was concerned, have drawn hitherto from our eyes a single tear?

Lord, let us not be led into temptation! Let us not by temptation be induced to sin! Let us not by sin be drawn into repetition of offence! But from offence let us proceed to sorrow, from sorrow to repentance; to sorrow such as may cost us tears, to repentance such as may ensure us pardon!

Christ is brought bound, and accused unto Pilate.

1¹ And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

4² And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

¹ Matt. 27. 1.

² Matt. 27. 13.

§ 169. *The risk of being numbered among the enemies of Christ.*

In this sad history, whilst we admire the meek behaviour of the accused, we must view with abhorrence the injustice of the judge, and the frantic violence of the accusers. "Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them." He consented, rather than offend the populace, to let loose the guilty. And for the like reason "he delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." He yielded up the innocent to death; that very one of whom he had so lately asked "Why, what evil hath he done?" Nor had he first spared any means, however unfair and harsh, to convict ere he condemned our Lord. "Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews?" This was calling on Him to eriminate Himself. Nor would any crime have more surely exposed Him to the severity of the Roman government, than the setting up to be a king in their dominions. Let us never, unless we would share the guilt of Pilate, seek to drive matters to extremity against those even who are justly accused. Let us never take advantage of our station or ability to put any unfair question, even to those whom we may probably suspect of wrong. But if ever such inquiries are made of us ourselves, then we must be true to answer what we might not be free to ask. We must reply with our Lord, "Thou sayest it," if true: though, if false, we may answer nothing. "Thou sayest it." That is, I am a King; though not such a king as you suppose me to set up for; I am the King of the Jews. I am the King they ought to serve, the King who is described as reigning "in righteousness;" Isaiah 32. 1; the King, not of this people only, but of all who are Jews inwardly, "whose circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not of the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. 2. 29.

"And the chief priests accused him of many things." How doubly sinful was such violence in those ministers of religion whose office was one of peace and mercy; who are described by the apostle as having compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way! See Heb. 5. 2. And how doubly hateful was their sin, that they should not only themselves accuse Christ, but move also the people to desire of Pilate, "that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." Thus were they blinded by their rage, and knew not the messenger of the covenant, whom they ought to have delighted in. See Mal. 3. 1. Thus did they choose a rebel and a murderer, whilst they rejected Him who was at once the Prince of peace, and the Lord of life.

Let us beware lest we ever approach to the character of their offence, by preferring in our choice of friends, the profligate to the devout; or in our choice of life, the path of riot, or the temper of that hatred which is murder, see 1 John 3. 15, to the ways of holiness and peace. "Crucify him," was the cry of the infatuated Jews, when Pilate asked them what they would that he should do to Christ. "Crucify him," is the answer which the world presents to those who would consult the practice of the world, for guidance in their behaviour to their Lord. "Crucify him," is the true interpretation of each wanton oath we hear, of each idle word expressive of indifference to sins which cost the blood of Christ. "Crucify him," is the note of revelry that sounds from the haunts of drunkenness, the tone of conversation that prevails amongst the idle, the covetous, and the cruel. Never, therefore, let us entertain that "friendship of the world," which is "enmity with God," James 4. 4, lest we become guilty also of joining in that cry of hatred which condemned our Saviour to the cross!

Christ is mocked, and also crucified with two thieves.

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Prætorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21 ¹ And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

24 And when they had crucified him they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, ² And he was numbered with the transgressors.

¹ Matt. 27. 32.

² Is. 53. 12.

§ 170. *That thieves and other like sinners may die with Christ.*

These several particulars in the humiliation of our Lord are well suited to make us think of the offensiveness of our sins, for which He so deeply suffered. How grievous must have been that fall of man, how hateful that corruption and iniquity, in God's sight, which required for its atonement not only death, not only the death of the innocent, but death with scourging, mockery, and blows, death in shame upon the cross! Let us in all these things see our Saviour's love. Let us feel that it was love towards ourselves. Is He scourged? Let us consider, that "with his stripes we are healed." Isa. 53. 5. Is He clothed with purple, and crowned with thorns? Let us reflect that this clothing is the covering of our shame, these drops of blood upon his brow issue from a fountain, in which our sins are made white as snow. And how should it qualify our vain conceit of dress, and our too fond admiration of earthly crowns and honours, to consider that these were the very things, which were applied in gross indignity to aggravate the sufferings of our Lord!

Again, the soldiers in scorn salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Let us call to mind, that in patiently submitting to this mockery, He bare the disgrace we ought to have endured; and taught us, however high our station really is, whatever excellence we actually possess, not to murmur, if it should be turned to our reproach. "And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him." Let us resolve that there is no contumely so mortifying to our feelings, no blow so offensive to our pride, but what we would readily be subject to it on due occasion, and receive it with resignation to the will of God. And why should it be thought by us a thing too hard to submit to the slightest personal indignity? Is our outward form more sacred than that tabernacle of the flesh which the Son of God was veiled in? Is our character for true dignity, and true courage, more important than was his? Or is it not rather that our thoughts, unlike his, are high, our tempers irritable, our hearts unconstrained by love?

"And they crucified him." This was the consummation of his sufferings. "And with him they crucify two thieves." This was the consummation of his shame and disgrace. And thus was the Scripture fulfilled, which saith, "He was numbered with the transgressors." He died, not for them only, but with them. As He refused not, during his life, to be numbered with publicans and sinners, so neither in his death did He disdain to be crucified between two thieves. Let none then, least of all the most excellent of Christians, presume to count the worst unworthy of their fellowship, either in life or death. To suppose ourselves among the best is a plain sign that we are not so. To deem ourselves too good to live with or to die with sinners, such as were these thieves on the cross, is to forget that we are sinners like themselves, in like need of God's mercy through Christ. What, have we never wronged our neighbour to his harm or loss? Have we never robbed, if not man of his property, yet God of his honour, by profaning his day, or wasting, for our selfish lusts and advantages, the capacities and means of which He has made us stewards? And do we trust that we notwithstanding repent? Do we hope notwithstanding to be forgiven? Let us hope then for the most hardened of our brethren, that God may in his mercy turn their hearts, and bring them to the knowledge and the practice of the truth. Let us hope that amongst thieves even and murderers, amongst drunkards and adulterers, amongst the covetous, and the dishonest, and the uncharitable, there may be some who, through repentance and faith, even yet shall die with Christ, and shall be the same day with Him in paradise.

God give us grace to bear with fortitude, and to relieve with love, the ills which man inflicts on man! God set us above the fear of mockery and scorn; above being ashamed to submit to blows; above being inclined either to resent the injury of the proud, or to despise the tears of the abandoned! God help us to feel, as for ourselves, for the most wicked and wretched of our brethren! God make us, for our Saviour's sake, to think of and to care for them, even as we should wish, if we were in like case, that they would care for and think of us!

Christ on the cross giveth up the ghost.

29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Al, thou that destroyest the temple; and buildest it in three days,

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud

voice, saying, ¹ Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the Ghost.

38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

¹ Matt. 27. 46.

§ 171. *How we may best have light in the darkness of the grave.*

Whilst the Saviour of mankind was on the cross, there were found, among those for whose sins He suffered, men of so hard a heart, that they "railed on him, wagging their heads," and taunting Him with the very promises which He had uttered for their good. This should help to put us out of conceit with all that raillery, all that humorous or severe censure, which forms a large part of the amusement of the world. Let us consider how we are counted to do unto our Lord what we do unto our brethren, either for good or evil. Let us consider how often the feelings of our brethren are hurt by what we say or hear to their disparagement. Let us consider how the words of indiscriminating wit are directed commonly against the principles of holiness, and are calculated to render more difficult, through apprehension of contempt, the path of them who would fain be righteous. Let us consider how it was with like cruel mockery, that they who passed by thought fit to aggravate the sufferings of Christ upon the cross. And we shall thus be the more inclined to be moderate in our mirth, and not so careful in what we say to furnish entertainment, as fearful of giving scandal, or of aggravating pain.

One chief point of the mockery, here levelled against our Lord, was founded on his prophetic declaration, that He would in three days rebuild the temple first destroyed. "This he spake of the temple of his body;" John 2. 21; how He should be put to death, and how within three days He would raise Himself from the dead. But his enemies, conceiving Him to have referred to some such miracle as the many which He had already performed, chose hence to object to Him, that if He could so greatly save others, He surely might now save Himself. And this is a common topic of raillery with the worldly wise; who scarce allow the possibility that any action can proceed from a kind, or upright, or disinterested motive. Surely, say they, he who does good to others, has something thereby to gain for himself. But let us, instead of the practice of selfishness in ourselves, and the continual suspicion of it in others, let us learn from our Lord's example to save rather, and to serve our neighbours; and by the words of his enemies let us be put upon our guard, never to doubt that our neighbours also would willingly do the like for us.

"And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." And so the prophet Amos had foretold: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." Amos 8. 9. Three hours the whole earth was in darkness. For now was to be put out, for three days, the life of Him who was "a light to lighten the Gentiles." Luke 2. 32. And now did that "Sun of righteousness," which had arisen "with healing in his wings," Mal. 4. 2, set, as it were, for a short time in the shades of death. Let us imagine how in that darkness we should have felt ourselves. Let us imagine how we shall feel when this world's sun shall set to us for the last time, as we lie down to die. And let us reflect, that as the darkness is here said to have ceased, at the very hour when Christ yielded up the ghost, so is it his death that must dispel our more gloomy thoughts, his voice that can make us hear in the darkness of the grave, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isa. 60. 1.

The more sorrowfully He called out, when dying on the cross, the stronger is our ground of assurance that He feared and felt for sorrows not his own; the more sure our hope, that in this his strong crying in our behalf, He "was heard in that he feared." Heb. 5. 7. God had not forsaken Him. God, even in our sins, for his sake had not forsaken us. In our fall He designed our redemption, for our iniquity He proclaimed forgiveness, in our weakness He makes perfect strength. And even when the veil of our flesh is rent in twain by death, though "the silver cord be loosed," and "the dust return to the earth as it was;" Eccl. 12. 6, 7; though we also in that hour may be inclined to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet may we, ere the end, through God's love and Christ's example, be enabled no less heartily to say, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit: for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth." Psalm 31. 5.

Christ is buried by Joseph of Arimathea.

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, ¹ followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

42 ² And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

43 Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and

went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and hid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

¹ Luke 8. 3.

² Matt. 27. 57.

§ 172. *That from Christian love springs Christian courage.*

The behaviour of our Lord on the cross, and especially the manner of his crying out at the moment of death, made "the centurion, which stood over against him," confess, "Truly this man was the Son of God." For this he said on seeing that Christ "so cried out, and gave up the ghost." And this circumstance has with some reason been thought to mean, that it was altogether beyond the power of mere human nature, for a man so to cry out, when exhausted by crucifixion to the point of death. So that He must, at the very end, have still had his life in his own possession to the full; according to what He elsewhere said of it: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down." John 10. 18. And how should it enliven our affection towards Jesus Christ our Lord, to consider this signal instance of his having loved his own unto the end. See John 13. 1. Not only when He left the glory of the Father, to take on Him the likeness of our sinful flesh, see Rom. 8. 3, not only when He "went about doing good," Acts 10. 38, not only when He endured so meekly "the contradiction of sinners against himself," Heb. 12. 3; not then only was He animated by a heavenly love for us his unworthy people. But when also He had been suffering the severest pain that could be inflicted, when He had drunk to the very dregs that cup, of which He prayed so earnestly, that it might have passed from Him, when his human frame was in the agony of death; then did that Lord who is Himself "the life," John 11. 25, choose freely, out of love for us, to die. Let us see that we love Him also "to the end;" that ere death draws near, we prepare ourselves for the change; and that when the change is evidently at hand, we are not so much constrained against our will, but choose rather, as of ourselves, "to depart, and to be with Christ." Phil. 1. 23.

Thus would Christian love cast out the most painful of all earthly fear, the fear of death. Thus Christian love would help also to attain that holy confidence in God, which is the very soul of Christian courage. Of such courage we have in the passage before us three instances worthy to be observed. We see the centurion confessing our Lord to be "the Son of God;" we see the women "looking on afar off," at the very moment when the greater part of the disciples had through fear forsaken Him and fled; and we see also how Joseph of Arimathea, at the same juncture, when there was least hope of help in man, "went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus." Courage then is not insensibility to danger. It is not for women to behold, without shrinking, the agonies of death. It is not for a centurion to view without awe the darkening of the sun at noonday. But in the midst of the threatenings of man, or the most formidable manifestation of divine power, it is to repose our trust on the divine mercy; it is to fear no harm, because we feel assured that God is able, and through Christ willing, to save from harm both body and soul.

And the proof of this courage is, that we endure with fortitude those ills, which it seems good to God's providence to inflict, either on ourselves, or on those we are bound to love. Never must we decline a manifest duty, out of fear of its exposing us to the sight of such misery as it is pain to see. Ever must we be ready, with these holy women, to visit the most heartrending scenes of want or woe; with the desire to assist, according to our ability, with the conviction that God can out of pain and sorrow perfect happiness and joy. But we must do more than witness pain with fortitude, we must encounter it where necessary with firm resolution. We must brave, with the honourable counsellor here mentioned, the peril of persecution and death, when the credit of our Saviour is concerned. Rather than not pay to the remains of Jesus all decent respect, Joseph of Arimathea put willingly in jeopardy his wealth, his station in the council, his credit with the people, his very life. How is it then that we commonly refuse, through fear, in duties of much more obvious obligation, to risk ever so little loss or inconvenience to ourselves; to encounter even the frown of the world, the scoffer's laugh, or an hour's displeasure in a friend?

An angel declareth the resurrection of Christ.

1 ¹ And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 ¹ And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5 ² And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a

young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him ³ as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

¹ Luke 24. 1. John 20. 1.

² John 20. 11.

³ Matt. 26. 32.

§ 173. *How we must attempt with faith, in order to success.*—

The same women, who had so firmly endured to see Jesus crucified, took courage also to attempt the anointing of his body, as it lay in the sepulchre of Joseph. For this purpose they bought sweet spices, they spared no expense in the honouring of One whom they so truly loved, and so deeply mourned. This conduct, recorded to their honour, may satisfy us that we are allowed by Christ, in the respect which we are by nature inclined to pay to the last remains of those we love. Not that we should herein gratify our own vanity, or commit that waste, or indulge that taste for pomp and show, which are in no case permitted to a Christian. But so far as our means may properly afford, so far as, within the limits of sobriety, may be suitable to the station of the deceased, we may properly, the very poorest of us, do honour after this sort to their memory. And something it may add to our zeal in so doing, and something also qualify with spiritual regard the temper in which we do it; to consider, that the body, which we bury, is entitled, by the promise of our Lord, to rise again from the grave.

It was “very early in the morning the first day of the week,” when the two Marys and Salome “came unto the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun.” As they spared no expense in what they bought, they spared also no exertion of their own; no wakefulness, no sacrifice of rest and sleep. And shall we slothfully linger in our beds when we might healthfully and profitably “arise, and be doing.” 1 Chron. 22. 16. Shall we choose, as do many, the very first day of the week, here mentioned, for the indulgence of more than ordinary laziness? Rather let us, by diligence and self-denial, in early rising, redeem as far as possible the time we may yet have given us. Rather let us on the Lord’s day above all others, be wakeful and watchful; seeking and delighting, early and late, to sound his praises, and to learn his will.

And now observe the holy resolution of these women in the work they had in hand. They were aware indeed that it would be no easy matter to enter where the body of Christ was laid. “They said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” “for it was very great.” They had no prospect of obtaining entrance by any means they knew of. Yet none the less did they prepare the spices, and rise up early to the undertaking. “And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.” An angel appearing in the form of a young man had made open the entrance they desired. And so for us also will the spirits, who “minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,” Heb. 1. 14, for us also, if we have faith and diligence, will they roll away the stone which is beyond our strength, and make ready our entrance to the place we look for.

Let us hence learn, in the discharge of any duty we have to do, never to be discouraged by apprehended obstacles, or hindered from making all such preparations, and endeavours, for its performance, as lie in our power. It is “the slothful man,” as Solomon remarks, that “saith there is a lion in the way.” Prov. 22. 13. When we fail in the most difficult of our duties, it is rather for lack of zeal and inclination, for lack of diligent exertion in the attempt, than from any thing insuperable in the impediments they present. Let us resolve, therefore, however hard our task, to have every thing on our part prepared; to be early at our work, and earnest in our prayers. Let us learn from these women a holy resolution; a faith like that of Noah, who, being “warned of God of things not seen as yet,” “prepared an ark to the saving of his house;” like that of Abraham, who, being called to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, “went out, not knowing whither he went.” Heb. 11. 7, 8. Then shall we find removed the obstacle we most feared, the stone we most apprehended, “rolled away.” Then shall we be saved, where we least durst hope for help. Then shall we condemn the world; that is, prove by our success the wickedness of worldly fear and worldly sloth. Then shall we become heirs “of the righteousness which is by faith;” and shall enter, as we scarce could venture to expect, the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Heb. 11. 7, 10.

Christ appeareth to Mary Magdalene, and to the eleven.

9 Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, ¹ he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, ² out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

12 After that he appeared in another form ³ unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

13 And they went and told *it* unto the residue: neither believed they them.

14 ⁴ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they

sat || at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

15 ⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; ⁶ but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe: ⁷ In my name shall they cast out devils; ⁸ they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall ⁹ take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; ¹⁰ they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

¹ John 20. 14.

² Luke 8. 2.

³ Luke 24. 13.

⁴ Luke 24. 36. John 20. 19.

|| Or, together.

⁵ Matt. 28. 19.

⁶ John 12. 48.

⁷ Acts 16. 18.

⁸ Acts 2. 4.

⁹ Acts 28. 5.

¹⁰ Acts 28. 8.

§ 174. *How we must help to make others believe.*

Jesus, after rising from the dead, vouchsafed to be seen by the same faithful women, whose fitness to be witnesses had been proved in their attendance at the sepulchre and at the cross. "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." Wherein we see the condescension of our Lord to one, who had been so fearfully taken captive by Satan at his will. See 2 Tim. 2. 26. So that we ought never, by too strict exclusion from our society of those who have greatly sinned, to refuse, as it were, room for repentance; and to run risk of rejecting those, whom God has through Christ accepted. For most plainly we might here discern the efficacy of that contrition and faith, which was blest with this preference in the manifestation of Christ. And most thankfully we might conclude for ourselves, that however fully we have been possessed by evil spirits, whether by pride or passion, falsehood, intemperance, covetousness, or uncharitableness, we may nevertheless, if only Christ have cast them out, if only we have become faithful and devout, behold hereafter our Lord in glory.

The first use Mary made of this high privilege, was to go and tell "them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept." This should teach us to be willing to communicate to others, especially to such as are in distress, the glad tidings of salvation. That "the poor have the gospel preached to them," Matt. 11. 5, was a sign of Christ's coming, and it is a good work which He hath left for Christians to maintain. We should all of us desire to have a hand in it according to our ability. We should all gladly help to promote Christian knowledge, at home, and abroad. We should all have compassion "on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," Heb. 5. 2; affording to the heathen in foreign lands, and to the poor and profligate in our own, all help of instruction in righteousness.

The apostles at the first "believed not." Neither afterwards believed they the two other disciples to whom Christ appeared as they "went into the country." And so often it will be with those whom we help to instruct, either by our example and advice, or by our encouragement and assistance of those who teach and preach. Many times they believe not. Many times they persevere in refusing to believe. But we must repeat our testimony, and renew, with patience, our work of love. For let us consider how momentous is the interest at stake; how awful the Gospel alternative. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Eternal condemnation is on the one hand: on the other is salvation unto everlasting life. And whatever may be the condition of those who never shall hear these tidings, they are such surely as it must greatly concern all to hear, and must greatly concern all who hear to believe. Let us labour, and spend, and persevere, to make them known to all we can. And let us hope that these will make them known to others. Let us hope, that by convincing and converting those nearest to ourselves, our words and works may go forth into the world, and help to "preach the gospel to every creature."

The signs which followed them that believe, in the age of the apostles, were miracles. In our own times the effectual evidence of faith is holiness of heart and life. And this also must be done in the same name by which the primitive believers cast out devils, spake with new tongues, took up without harm deadly serpents, and deadly drink, and laid hands upon the sick, and they recovered. It is in the name of Christ that we must work those marvels of grace and godliness, which are the best proof of our own faith, and the chief means of making others believe. Would that his holy name were less frequently pronounced in levity, and more often mentioned with reverence and love! Would that we might more often be heard to speak with the new tongues of truth and purity, what "may minister grace unto the hearers!" Ephes. 4. 29. Would that we might learn to encounter without hurt "that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world!" Rev. 12. 9. Would that we might be careful to enjoy without intemperance that drink which "maketh glad the heart of man," Ps. 104. 15, but which in excess is poison to the soul! Would that by our medicine and alms, by our counsel, influence, and fervent prayers, we might help, not only the sick to recover, but them that are compassed with infirmity to be strong, and them that are sick at heart to be whole!

Christ is received up into heaven.

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was ¹ received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, ² and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

¹ Luke 24. 51.

² Heb. 2. 4.

§ 175. *That we should in heart and mind ascend to heaven.*

The ascension of our Lord into heaven should teach us, ever in heart and mind thither to ascend. (See Collect, Ascension Day.) And for this purpose it is well that we should make the hope of heaven the subject of our very frequent reflections. It is scarce credible, if it were not that our own conscience so sadly confirms the report, that mankind should have continually before them so "exceeding great and precious promises," 2 Pct. 1. 4, and yet so seldom think about the matter. We seem unable to bring home to our thoughts this truth in its proper force; to imagine with any liveliness of faith the prospect of our entering into a state of glory inconceivable. This prospect is as certain as God's word; if only we repent and obey the Gospel. And this certainty has been graciously confirmed to us by the fact here recorded of our Lord's ascension. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven." In the form of man He spake to them, in the body wherewith He rose from the dead. In the same body, in the same form, "he was received up into heaven." He ceased to be seen by their wondering eyes. He was taken they knew not how, to a place they knew not where. Only they knew, and through them we know, that it was to heaven. And we know that where He is, there we, through his merits and mercy, may be also. See John 14. 3. And is it not most strange, that we think so seldom of our hope of being there?

Our Lord on being received into heaven sat, as St. Mark adds, "on the right hand of God." Herein we have fulfilled the many Scriptures which express, by this figure of speech, his sovereign power, his dignity, his endless joy. "Hereafter," said He of Himself, "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power." Matth. 26. 64. And again, that it expresses his dignity, we have this instance in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "When he had by his power purged our sins," He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. 1. 3. And of the joyfulness of that honourable place we have the testimony of the Psalmist in these words: "In thy presence is the fulness of joy; and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." Psalm 16. 11. Such are the terms to which the Spirit hath given utterance in holy writ, as expressing, what no terms can properly describe, where Christ our Lord now is! Such is the language by which God would have us to understand how high is his blessed Son, how "much better than the angels;" Heb. 1. 4; how at the head of "all principality and power," Col. 2. 10; how all one with God Himself! Great should be our joy to think, that whilst there He sitteth, He ever maketh intercession for us! Heb. 7. 25. Great should be our thankfulness to know, that He is gone to prepare a place for us. See John 14. 2. Great should be our desire to go where He hath gone before! Great should be our love of Him, who at the first came thence for our redemption from sin, and thither was seen to return, for our greater encouragement in holiness!

The apostles fulfilled his commands by going forth, and preaching every where. And the Lord fulfilled his promise by "working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." And thus were the gentile nations induced to receive the Gospel, by the miracles which its preachers were enabled to perform. And thus has it come to pass that we ourselves are Christians, have been brought up in the Christian faith; our fathers having received it, in succession, from those, who were convinced by the very miracles which the apostles wrought. Thus the signs, with which the Lord confirmed his word, are brought home in their result unto ourselves. And the preaching also of the apostles, which our fathers heard, has been made effectual, through their parental care, to our nurture in the knowledge of the Gospel. Through many generations, and they oftentimes of weak or wicked men; through ages of gross ignorance, and periods of professed indifference to the doctrine of Christ crucified; there have been handed down to us, in their primitive simplicity, the pure elements of Christian faith, the unerring manuals of Christian practice. In the writings of the apostles we have all that is needful for man to know, whereby we may be saved. In the Gospels, out of the many things which Christ said and did, we have recorded, enough to make us sure that He was the Christ, that should come to be the Saviour of the world. Let us be thankful for information so full, on topics of such supreme importance. Let us devoutly own, as we conclude each portion of the sacred book, how much we owe to God for the possession of it. Let us devoutly pray that we may understand it rightly, use it profitably, and meditate on it continually.

And, lastly, let us consider that the great use of such frequent communion with God, in the study of his will, is to make us more like to what He would have us be; to fit us for that place which He hath prepared for us to dwell in. "Here we have no continuing city;" Heb. 13. 14; as even Christ Himself in this his own world was seen to stay only for a while. He is born, He lives, He dies. He rises from the dead. He ascends into heaven. Such is the brief summary of the Gospel history. And shall we ever forget that our own time is short? Shall we reckon to abide for a continuance, in a place where He stayed so few short years? Shall we think that we can possibly add year to year, as long as we have designs to execute, or duties we are wishing to fulfil? Shall we desire to do so, if we could. Shall heaven be open to us, and we not wish to enter in?

Shall the presence of God be put within our reach, and we not long to partake of it? Never may we so faintly seek what God has so graciously revealed! Never may we so thanklessly refuse what He has so kindly offered! Never may we cease to labour for the good things He hath prepared! Never may we fail in heart and mind to love and think of their enjoyment! Never may we think ourselves worthy of them! Never make ourselves more unworthy than we are!

Grant, Lord, that as we read thy word, we may learn to love thy way; may know thy truth, may do thy will, and may desire to be with Thee where Thou art! Confirm in us, by signs following the word we read, by the life we live! Make us, each day we continue here, more meek, more poor in spirit, more kind, more true, more pure, more fit to live, more ready to depart, more willing, and longing, and hasting, to dwell with Thee in heaven!

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE 1. 1—4.

The preface of St. Luke to his whole Gospel.

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word;

3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

§ 176. *How we should use with thankfulness the written word.*

St. Luke, though not himself an apostle, was for a long time the constant companion of St. Paul. His reasons for writing a Gospel he here states to be, first, that many others had “taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration” of these things. Which accounts, we may hence conclude, were in some respect faulty, and therefore not permitted to come down to our times. Whereas St. Luke assures us of himself, that he had enjoyed “perfect understanding of all things from the very first;” meaning, no doubt, the full illumination of the Holy Spirit, guiding him into all truth. And thus much he seems to imply also in what he says of his second reason for writing; “that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

These words here addressed to Theophilus are spoken also to every one who reads or hears this Gospel. We may hence know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed. Thankful we ought to be that we have been taught, from father to son, to believe in Jesus Christ. Thankful also we ought to feel for having had ministers ordained in succession from the beginning, to keep these things ever in the remembrance of mankind. But further, we have to give thanks for the written word; for records of the history of our blessed Lord, penned under the guidance of his Holy Spirit, on purpose to assure us that “we have not followed cunningly devised fables.” 2 Pet. 1. 16. Such a record is the Gospel before us. Let us endeavour, by the study of it, both better to know the certainty of what we have believed, and better also to practise the excellency of what we already know.

The appearance of an angel to Zacharias.

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the

Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong-drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

¹ Exod. 30. 7. Lev. 16. 17.

² Mal. 4. 6.

|| Or, *by*.

§ 177. *That it is possible to be counted blameless before God.*

The things to be believed in the Christian religion begin from the very outset to run in a strange and supernatural course. And this is one way by which we may know their certainty, for they are such as could not readily have obtained credit, unless they had really happened. And if it be once felt that they really happened, it cannot for a moment be doubted that they were ordered, for some good purpose, by God Himself. Else why should the course of nature be suspended, the barren be made to bear, and angels from another world minister visibly in this, if it were not that we might be constrained to own in every stage of the Gospel history, "this is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes." Ps. 118. 23. Let us take heed then that we continually discern the hand of God, ordering for our good all things that here we read of.

The visit of the angel, who announced to Zacharias the miraculous birth of a son, is set down with all those circumstances of time and place which might best serve to verify the fact. It was "in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa." And Zacharias was "of the course of Abia;" which course came round once every year into office, on a fixed month, familiarly known among the Jews. It was "while he executed the priest's office;" and while "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." This fixes the very hour of the day; the hour, namely, at which these things were used to be done. The place also in which the angel stood is recorded: "on the right side of the altar of incense." All these particulars served to certify to the Jews, who were familiar with them, the extraordinary event to which they refer. And to us also they help to shew how the sacred writers took pains to relate every thing with exact fidelity, and how God, by whose inspiration they were guided, condescended to accommodate the history to our notions of convincing evidence.

And now observe how it is said here of Zacharias and his wife that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." See therefore that you never so conceive of human frailty, as to despair of doing far more faithful service than you have hitherto done for God. Even under the yoke of the Law it is pronounced in Scripture of this man and of his wife, that they were blameless. And shall we not hope, and hopefully endeavour also, to be blameless before God under the Gospel? In that righteousness which is not our own, but Christ's, wrought in us by his grace, through faith, in that holiness which is the gift of God, but which is by his goodness grafted in our hearts, "let us go on unto perfection;" Heb. 6. 1; not trusting in ourselves, and yet not distrusting but that we ourselves shall in the end prevail, and shall also have then "praise of God." 1 Cor. 4. 5. In the message of the angel note the description of the child that was to be born. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord;" not, as many seem rather to wish for their children, great in the sight of the world; but great in those points which God esteems; selfdenial, grace, and zeal in well-doing. And this is what is meant by his drinking "neither wine nor strong drink;" for such was at that time a practice among those who devoted themselves to the service of God. And such is the kind of discipline we must lay upon ourselves, if we would hope to do God good service; to deny ourselves many allowable indulgences, to separate ourselves and our families from many practices which are prevalent in the world around us.

Oh, may God's Holy Spirit make ready in us, and we, by our influence and example, make ready in others, "a people prepared for the Lord;" turning "the hearts of the fathers unto the children," converting the souls of all, both old and young, to the disposition of guileless infants; and "the disobedient," that is, the wilful sinners, "to the wisdom of the just," to the timely forethought of them who through faith obey!

Elisabeth conceived, as was visited by an angel.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, *Whereby shall I know this?* for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days

|| Or, *graciously accepted*, or, *much graced*: see ver. 30.

§ 178. *The example of the Virgin Mary.*

Zacharias, who had before been pronounced "blameless," is here guilty of distrusting the angel's words. "Whereby shall I know this?" is his reply to the divine message. For a sign, and for a punishment, it is appointed to him, "Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed." If we find ourselves often unable to utter, what we know we ought to say, to God's honour, and for the edification of our neighbour, may we not always justly trace the silence of our tongues to the distrustful condition of our hearts? Had we but more lively faith, we should soon have more free utterance. Had we but a more deep and abiding conviction of things heavenly, we should find it hard not to speak, instead of difficult to utter, the "things wherewith one may edify another." Rom. 14. 19. As it is, how little better are we than dumb, if we talk only of this world's business, or news, and seldom or never of things spiritual! if we hear, whilst in God's temple, the tidings of salvation, but cannot when we come out, speak of them to the people, either with our lips, or in our lives! Let us feel as if this dumbness were sent us for our sins. Let us beware, lest we add to our neglect of holy talking, the utterance of any wicked or distrustful words. Let us learn from this history never to ask further of what God has once told us, "Whereby shall I know this?" but rather, however hard his sayings, let us speak, and think, and act, as being sure that they will be in their season fulfilled.

When Elisabeth had conceived, she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." When we have received from the Almighty any singular favour, it is a fit time to retire from public observation: for never are we more apt to be elated, never more liable to be tempted to pride, than when we meet with unexpected and undeserved success. Nor is this less true in things spiritual, than in our worldly concerns. When therefore the Lord seems to have looked graciously upon us for good, let us for a time at least refrain from publishing our joy. Let us wait till we are more confirmed in holiness. Let us fear lest we may yet fall away. Let us watch that we fall not. Let us hide ourselves; that is, suppress the extent of our convictions, so far as we may consistently with God's honour, with a view to be more safe from the temptation of pride, and less likely, if we fall, to make our brethren to offend.

Six months after his visit to Zacharias, the same angel Gabriel was sent on a like divine errand to the Virgin Mary. In his salutation it is remarkable that Mary is called blessed "among women:" whereas in the Old Testament Jael is called "blessed above women." Judg. 5. 24. So that there is here no foundation for any such preeminence above human nature as is assigned by the church of Rome to the Virgin Mary. Eminent she was for such piety, as we should all endeavour to attain; eminent for such modesty, as made her to be troubled at the voice of praise; eminent for such purity of heart, as fitted her to be the mother of Him, who "did no sin." 1 Pet. 2. 22. And for this important office it was necessary that she should be of a nature the very same as the rest of mankind. A daughter of Adam, that Christ might be the Son of man. Of the house of David, that He might be the Son of David. A virgin, that He might be conceived without spot of sin; but espoused, that is betrothed in wedlock to Joseph, that her son might thus be legally, as well as naturally, of the house and lineage of David; that the husband might be the witness and the guardian of the mother's virgin purity, and that we might learn from this notable instance, in opposition to all false doctrines on the subject, that "marriage is honourable in all." Heb. 13. 4.

God grant that we may be highly favoured, by being eminent in grace and goodness! God make us to be blessed among all mankind, for the height of our piety, no less than of our privileges! The Lord be with us, as with Mary, for our good! In all we do, in all we say, in all we think; in our going out, and in our coming in; in our life, and in our death; the Lord be with us!

Christ is conceived by the Holy Ghost.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

¹ Is. 7. 14. Matt. 1. 21.

² Dan. 7. 14. Mic. 4. 7.

|| Or, which believed that there.

§ 179. *Christ a spotless sacrifice for sin.*

How different were the distrustful words of Zacharias: "Whereby shall I know this?" from the modest inquiry of Mary, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The one doubts what was declared. The other inquires on a point left undetermined. And the answer she receives is a full declaration, both for her sake, and for ours, that the holy thing conceived in her, was no other than "the Son of God." It is lawful then to ask for information. It is desirable to search and inquire, as far as we are able, into the things of God. Only we must ask with full purpose to believe whatever we may know to be his answer. Happy shall we be, when our diligent inquiries have brought us to a deep conviction, that Jesus is the "Son of the Highest," the Saviour of the world! Happy when in every truth that is revealed, and in every duty that is enjoined, we can say devoutly to our Lord: "be it unto me according to thy word!"

The blessed Virgin having been told by the angel of what had befallen Elisabeth, made haste to visit her on the occasion. She might naturally be anxious to confer with her on the gracious dispensations they had both received, the one most directly opposite to nature, as the other was beyond its usual course. "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb." By which special token she was at once made aware that the mother of the Messiah was come unto her. And, accordingly, she thankfully and humbly confessed to Christ, in words not unlike to these which afterwards her son addressed to Him, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Matt. 3. 14. Thus whilst Mary, like Elisabeth, sought for privacy, she sought also the society of one who had experienced like mercy from God with herself. And this should teach us, that however desirable it may be to avoid the public expression of our religious feelings, it is no less our duty, where friends can rely on each other's discretion and sincerity, for us to commune together on the dealings of God with our immortal souls.

• But the chief thing to be observed in this whole passage, is the immaculate or spotless conception of Jesus Christ our Lord, by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary. That is to say, the ever blessed Sou of God became the Son of man, taking on Him our flesh, and yet without spot of our sinfulness. And this lies at the very foundation of our Christian faith. For He that was to die for our sins had need be without stain of sin Himself. And therefore was He thus brought into the world in a new and unheard of method, both that He might be, and that we might surely know Him to be, a Lamb without spot, taking away the sins of the world. See John 1. 29. And in this light we ought chiefly to think of Christ our Saviour, not as of a man laying down his life for his friends, but as of God made man, and dying for the salvation of his creatures. So might we be the more moved to repent, if we were to feel duly how repentance on our part is made effectual, by merits so powerful on his. And so might we more affectionately love, if we were persuaded that through Him, and by Him alone, we have either health, or hope of safety. And so loving, we might no longer fear, but have hope, and joy, and peace, in believing. See Rom. 15. 13.

Give us, Lord, this faith, to know Thee, as Thou art, the Son of God most High! Give us, Lord, this faith to see Thee, as Thou once hast been, a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind! Give us, Lord, this faith, to repent unto amendment of life; to obey, not out of fear, but love; in the trust that there shall be a performance of those things which have been told us from Thee!

The hymn of Mary. The circumcision of John.

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51 ¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; ² he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 ³ He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 ⁴ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, ⁵ in remembrance of his mercy;

55 ⁶ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.

56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God.

¹ Is. 61. 9.

² Ps. 33. 10.

³ 1 Sam. 2. 6.

⁴ Ps. 34. 10.

⁵ Jer. 31. 3, 20.

⁶ Ps. 132. 11. Gen. 17. 19.

§ 180. *Encouragement to sincere obedience.*

The address offered to Mary by Elisabeth, raised probably the same feeling of modest confusion as the angel's salutation, v. 29. And in the hymn which followed, we see the right method of diverting our thoughts from praise to ourselves, namely, to give to God the glory, and to express our thankfulness to Him, from whom all good things come. And this we should do, not only when we are praised by others, but when we reflect within ourselves on the many privileges we enjoy, how highly we have been favoured by Almighty God, and how firmly we trust that the Lord is with us. Then might we, as an antidote to all spiritual pride, repeat within ourselves these words of the Virgin Mary, in some such sense as this which follows:

"My soul doth magnify," or count for great, "the Lord." "And my spirit hath rejoiced," not in my own doings, or in the consciousness of my own strength, but "in God my Saviour." For "he hath regarded" our low estate; even seeking, and saving that which was lost. He it is, in his might, who has "done to me great things;" making me to do, what without Him I could never do, to obey his will by choice. In our generation, as of old, his mercy is on them that fear Him. The mighty, them at least who use their might for ill, He doth often signally put down; and exalt, if not in wealth and strength, yet many times in grace and godliness, "them of low degree." Thus doth He fill "the hungry with good things," those especially who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And the rich he sendeth "empty away;" those, who say proudly in their hearts, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Rev. 3. 17. Thus doth He still help the spiritual Israel, the children of the faith of Abraham; imparting to us that mercy, of which He spake to our fathers, even redemption, through Christ.

"And Mary abode with her about three months;" at the end of which time, after Mary's departure home, Elisabeth gave birth to John the Baptist. Here observe how her neighbours and cousins "rejoiced with her," when they "heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her." And learn that it is an important part of charity, to "rejoice," as the apostle has bidden us, "with them that do rejoice." Rom 12. 15. Note also how this infant, though sanctified from the womb, was not exempted from the law of circumcision. And learn that the highest influences of God's unseen grace, are so far from interfering with the use of outward ordinances, that they incline and oblige us thereunto. Note further, in the custom of giving children their names, one among many points of resemblance, between circumcision among the Jews, and baptism among the Christians. And hence consider how reasonable is the baptism of infants, as it was uniformly practised for ages, without dispute, throughout the whole Christian world.

Both the mother, and afterwards the father, are firm in their purpose of having the child called John, a name which means, joy from God. They complied with the directions of the angel, against the wishes of their assembled friends. Let us resolve, however urgently our friends withstand us, in any point of Christian duty, always to obey God rather than men. And let us take for our encouragement the mercy here vouchsafed to Zacharias, who according to the sentence of the angel, might reasonably have expected to be dumb till the end of the ministry of his son. God, who could consider these things, to be performed, see ver. 20. on the very day that the child was named, accepts often of us also incomplete obedience; reckons as paid once for all by Christ that debt, which we must else have ever owed; and long ere we could hope to attain to many heaven, will, if only we obey his word through faith open to us the gates of everlasting life.

The Hymn of Zacharias.

65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these || sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa.*

66 And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

69 ¹ And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70 ² As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 ³ The oath which he sware to our father Abraham.

74⁴ That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people † by the remission of their sins,

78 Through the † tender mercy of our God: whereby the § dayspring from on high hath visited us,

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

|| Or, things.

¹ Ps. 132. 17.

² Jer. 23. 5. & 30. 9.

³ Gen. 22. 16.

† Or, for.

‡ Or, bowels of the mercy.

§ Or, sunrise, or, branch.

§ 181. *God's mercy magnified in our necessities.*

After his many months silence, the first use which Zacharias makes of his recovered speech is to declare the praises of God. If we were to talk less, and to think more, we should often think more profitably, and speak often more devoutly towards God, more charitably to each other. Thus we read of Joseph also about this same period, in St. Matthew's Gospel, that "while he thought on these things," Matt. 1. 20, while he took time to consider the propriety of putting away his betrothed wife, he was instructed by an angel to take her to himself. And thus if we had more of deliberation in our conduct, we should have more of mercy in our judgment; we should be more inclined both to bear and to forbear, both to forgive and give, both to give cheerfully to man of that which supplies our common wants, and to give to God the affection of our hearts, and the honour that is due unto his name.

But in this hymn it is expressly said of Zacharias, that he "prophesied," that is, revealed the will of Almighty God. And the subject of his prophecy was the redemption about to be wrought for mankind, whereof this child, then just named, was the messenger. If we would duly join in this hymn, if we would partake aright in the heavenly rejoicing here expressed, we should first endeavour to feel deeply our captivity unto sin, here described as darkness and the shadow of death. This consists in our natural inability to perceive things heavenly, in our natural incapacity to do things acceptable to God, in our natural perverse inclination to indulge the flesh, to love the world, and to listen to the deceitful suggestions of the devil. In this darkness, in this captivity, we should have had no choice, but to pass in vanity through things temporal, and to enter into things eternal in shame, and sorrow, and agony of fear; had not God, in Jesus Christ "visited and redeemed his people."

Let us then possess ourselves, or rather let us pray God to possess us, with a deep feeling of our many and great natural necessities, as the first step towards a right apprehension of the tender mercy of our God. Then shall we bless Him from our hearts, for that horn of salvation, that mighty Saviour, whom He has raised up for us "in the house of his servant David." Then should we take unto ourselves for our encouragement in holiness and hope, all the words of his holy prophets, "which have been since the world began." Then should we perceive in all his dispensations the fulfilment of his one great settled purpose, that we should be saved from our enemies, even from sin and from eternal death. This is the mercy God promised to our fathers. This is the covenant He hath carefully remembered. This is the oath which He sware unto Abraham: that we, thus "delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." This is the end for which Christ died, that we might be holy here, and happy hereafter. This is the purpose, for which the child here spoken of was to go before the face of the Lord, even to "prepare his ways," to give unto his people the knowledge of this salvation, the remission of past sin, and for the future to provide that our feet be safely guided in the way of peace.

Oh, may our footsteps, through God's tender mercy, now walk in that perfect way, that we may serve Him without painful fear, and not without fervent love! Oh, may we be found therein at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! May we grow, as the child here spoken of, waxing strong in the spirit; going on from grace to grace, from strength to strength; and so dwelling in the desert of this present life, so proof against all its snares, so faithful in all its trials, that when that day shall come, we may be shewn as joint heirs of the promises, to the assembled Israel of the saints of God!

Christ is born at Bethlehem.

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be || taxed.

2 (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*)

3 And all went to be taxed every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the ¹ city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

|| Or, enrolled.

¹ John 7. 42.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping † watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

† Or, the night watches.

§ 182. *Motives to lowliness of heart.*

In the record of this taxing of the world by Cæsar Augustus, we see how wonderfully the providence of the Almighty overrules the designs of feeble men. The decree of an emperor, sent forth from a remote metropolis, and arising probably in him from worldly policy, or worldly pride, is instrumental in fulfilling, and in proving to be fulfilled, several prophecies relating to the Messiah. For by this means it came to pass that He was born, as Micah had foretold, in Bethlehem of the land of Judah. See Micah 5. 2. By this means it is shewn that Joseph and Mary, and therefore Jesus her son, were of the house and lineage of David. And whereas it had been declared by Jacob, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh had come, see Gen. 49. 10, this taxing of Judæa by a Roman emperor affords clear demonstration, to all who believe the words of the Patriarch, that the Christ must at this time be brought into the world.

And now see how He entered this world of his own making. In form and fashion as a child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid by his mother in a manger; “because there was no room for them in the inn.” How forcibly does He here, at the very outset, teach us the vanity of that pomp and outside show, of which all are apt to deem too highly! Well He knew how ready we are to respect the rich merely because rich, to despise the poor merely because poor; how ready the rich are to presume upon their wealth, and the poor to repine for the want of it. And therefore would He be born Himself among the poor. And therefore, however hard may be the mystery of God manifested in the flesh, see 1 Tim. 3. 16, the lesson is plain, and the duties obvious, which arise from his being manifest in the condition of the poor. We must care neither for costly clothing, nor for comfortable abode; neither for ourselves, nor for our children, must we care for these things, with any anxious or deep concern; but only for the clothing of the soul, only for its final settlement in the building of God, prepared for it in heaven. See 2 Cor. 5. 1, 2.

For what is this life but as an inn, wherein we have but a short time to stay; a place where we may abide a while for business, or rest, during our journey to another country; but one which we must never look to as our home? And is not the world also in many respects most like unto this very inn, in which there was no room for Christ? Is it not a place where the wealthy are made welcome to profusion, whilst the hungry are sent empty away? Is it not as a house where there is ample indulgence for idleness and revelry, drunkenness and debauchery; but no space for holy thoughts, no hours for peaceful study of God’s word, or earnest supplication for his grace? In this scene of vanity let us content ourselves to be with Christ in the place of least esteem, rather than in a station of more worldly honour to risk losing his company for ever.

But lowly as these circumstances might seem to represent the person of our blessed Lord, we have it at the same time recorded in this passage, that his birth was proclaimed to shepherds by an angel, and celebrated by “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Thus was fulfilled what is noted by the apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, 1. 6, that when God “bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” Thus to us is certified by a testimony we can never doubt, first, that Jesus who was born that day was Christ the Saviour of the world. And secondly, it is expressly revealed to us, that the result of his birth, and the fruits which we should aim ever to derive from it, are the increase of God’s glory, the making peace between Him and our own souls, and the prevalence of good will amongst each other.

God grant that the more we know of Christ, and feel Him to be to us our Lord and Saviour, the more we may learn to love each other, the more find ourselves at peace with God, the more seek in all our words and works his glory!

Christ is circumcised.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and

praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

21 ¹ And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called ² JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, ³ Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to ⁴ that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

¹ Gen. 17. 12.

² Matt. 1. 21.

³ Exod. 13. 2. Numb. 18. 15.

⁴ Lev. 12. 2, 6.

§ 183. *How we should submit to what we cannot comprehend.*

The shepherds no sooner heard tidings of Christ, than they "said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." It is well, if when we hear of any good, either to be seen, or learnt, or done, we wait not to be urged, but are desirous and in haste to go thither. Yet when Christ is pointed out to us, as being present in his ordinances, how many are there who care not to attend! When He may be seen by us in every object of distress around us, when it is his voice with which the hungry ask for food, and the naked plead for clothing, how few are there who take pains to hear it! How few who, when they hear, attend to it! Let us seek of our own selves opportunity to do good. Let us be more desirous to give, than they who want are to receive; more deeply bent on helping and instructing those around us, than they are anxious to be taught and assisted.

And especially let us with these shepherds make known abroad the saying which has been told us also concerning this child, namely, that He is "Christ the Lord." Ver. 11. Whatever hopes we may reasonably entertain, in behalf of those who have never heard the preaching of the Gospel, we can have no doubt that it is our duty to make it known to them, and that it would be a great blessing to them to know it. With all the awful responsibility it lays on every soul of man, not only to obey his Creator, but to love his Redeemer Christ, and work with the working of the Holy Spirit in his soul; awful as is this responsibility, and most weighty this obligation, yet is it throughout Scripture represented as a great blessing to have the Gospel preached to us at all. This blessing let us endeavour therefore by all means in our power to extend to the uttermost among our brethren. And as the sending out of teachers and preachers exceeds usually the means of individuals, let us largely contribute to those societies which we may find, after due inquiry, to be most faithfully employed in propagating gospel truth.

While the people wondered at all these things, Mary, we are told, kept them, "and pondered them in her heart." How different is idle astonishment from fruitful meditation! How many wonder at the marvels related in God's word, for one that like Mary ponders on them in the heart, with humble faith and devout affection! In the many things we daily meet with above our comprehension, let us daily reflect, with reverential awe, that these things are as plain to God's wisdom, as they are easy to God's power. Whether it be the growth of the grass of the field, or the increase of our own stature, the support of our life by food, or, yet more passing strange, the nourishment of our souls by grace; in every thing, if we think attentively, we shall find much that is beyond our understanding, much to make us humble, thankful, and devout.

And very signally is this true of the ordinances of religion; as, for instance, of the one to which our Lord is here shewn to have submitted. Impossible it is to conceive how any such rite as circumcision could be needful unto Him "who knew no sin." 2 Cor. 5. 21. But in the conduct of Joseph and Mary we are taught that this was no reason for neglecting the ordinance of God. See also what care they took that the child should be called by the name which the angel had appointed. See how they brought Him at the time fixed by the law of Moses, to present Him in the temple of Jerusalem. See how they offered in his stead the enjoined sacrifice, though He was to be Himself the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The whole of this they probably were not aware of. But thus much they knew, that He was the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost. See ch 1. 35. Matt. 1. 20. But only so much the more were they purposed, in regard to Him, to fulfil all that the Law had enjoined. Only so much the more, as we have knowledge and grace, must we resolve, in that which we cannot comprehend, to obey what is clearly written. The more God has given unto us, let us offer the more unto Him. The more He has enlightened our minds, and kindled the affection of our hearts, let us the more devoutly submit them both to Him, in a willing, though not blind obedience, in a reasonable, not servile fear.

Simeon and Anna prophecy of Christ.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost *was* upon him.

26 And it *was* revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

1 *Is.* 8. 14. *Rom.* 9. 32.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the 'fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there *was* one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she *was* of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37 And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in || Jerusalem.

|| *Or, Israel.*

§ 184. *Devotion to things heavenly.*

It *was* a great privilege for Simeon and Anna to witness the presentation of Christ in the temple. And to Simeon it had been expressly revealed "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Nor *was* he insensible to the value of this promise. For he *was* "waiting for the consolation of Israel," that is, looking forward in faith and patience to the coming of the Messiah. "And the Holy Ghost *was* upon him;" that is to say, he had the gift of inspiration, to speak as he *was* moved by the Holy Ghost. Note here the fruit of waiting for Christ! Note the result of faith, when adorned with obedience and with love! In Simeon it *was* to behold the Messiah in the flesh. In us it is to see Him in the spirit; to be conscious of his present help, to be full of joy at the prospect of his second coming: for unto them who "look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. 9. 28.

And who that lives in the hope of eternal life through Christ, might not be thankful to depart? Conceive of Him as "a light to lighten the Gentiles;" "the Sun of righteousness," Mal. 4. 2, the Saviour, by whose love all men in all regions of the earth might escape the wrath to come! Conceive of Him as the glory of God's chosen people; the object of their whole dispensation; the end of all prophecy, the meaning of every type; the one only Prophet, Priest, and King, for whose sake all others ruled, and ministered and revealed God's will! And then say, should it not be to us a matter of most earnest longing, of most heartfelt thankfulness, that we may by any means attain to see this great and gracious Saviour? Say what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. See 2 Pet. 3. 12.

Whilst Joseph and the mother of the child *were* marvelling at the things thus spoken of Him, "Simeon," it is added, "blessed them." That is to say, he pronounced on them, by divine authority, the blessing of God. This blessing then is not incompatible with much suffering in this world; for it *was* at the same time declared to Mary, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Nor does He, through whom all blessings come, prove to all of necessity a Saviour in the end. For He *was* set "for the fall," as well as for the "rising again of many in Israel." Blessed are they, and they only, who, when they fall, have grace to rise; whose thoughts, when they are revealed, or brought to the proof, are found to be right with God; and who look for Christ, as for a sign, not to speak against, but to speak unto in prayer, and to look on with sure trust in his ability to heal!

Such an one *was* Anna, here mentioned in honour, as a prophetess; and not only thus enabled to reveal to others the will of God, but disposed by his good help to fulfil it herself. For this is the purport of what is said of her devotion; that "she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." And this probably means, not that she never left the temple at all, but that she never missed any service there performed. Nor if her abode had been there kept continually, would such exclusive attention to things heavenly have been more than *was* becoming to her age and condition. The abuses which have attended often on the practice of a monastic life, should not render us insensible to the duty of spending large portions of our time in meditation, and prayer, and fasting. And especially as we advance in age, if God think fit to spare us to that time of life, in which there is little ability to act; what employment can be more edifying to others, more profitable to ourselves, or more apt to prepare us for the joys we hope soon to attain, than continual exercises of selfdenial and devotion, for the greater mortification of the body, and for the more effectual awakening of the soul?

Christ dwelleth with Joseph and Mary.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they

¹ Deut. 16. 1.

found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

|| Or, age.

§ 185. *The importance of piety in youth.*

This passage contains all that is recorded of our Lord during the time of childhood, or rather from his birth till the age of about thirty, when he entered on his public ministry. It plainly informs us that the blessed Son, having taken on Him our flesh, went through the usual process of human growth, and submitted to the same successions of age as ordinarily take place with mankind. Thus we may better know that He was perfect man, consisting of a body and soul like our own; whilst He was also at the same time perfect God, one with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. It is in respect of his human nature that St. Matthew says "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." It was in reference to his divine nature, and to God his heavenly Father, that He replied to his enquiring parents, "wist ye not," that is, know ye not, "that I must be about my Father's business?"

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover." The law enjoined this attendance on all the males. See Exod. 23. 17. And they were often accompanied, as in the present case, by their families, though they had little convenience in travelling, but were forced to journey in large companies, for fear of want, or robbers in the way. How hard a service this must seem to those Christians, who can scarce for one hour put aside their daily business, in order to visit the house of prayer; who excuse themselves from attending, if the distance be never so little fatiguing, or the road never so little inconvenient! Let us learn from this instance how easy is the yoke of Christ compared with the burden of the Law. Let us lay to heart that so much the more cheerfully we ought to give to God the honour due unto his name, so much the more gladly to frequent his house, so much the more thankfully to praise his goodness.

In the youth of our blessed Lord, as here described, what a pattern do we find for the training of our children, what a contrast to the disposition and employments too common in our own early years! To be thirsting for divine knowledge, to be deeply engaged in heavenly things, and to be not the less subject to his earthly parents, of whom one was his parent only in name; such was the grace of the infant Jesus, such were the means by which we learn that He increased in favour with God and man. How can we then too carefully train up in godliness, humility, and love, the children committed to our care? How can we ever sufficiently deplore the waste we have ourselves made of those precious years, in which we might have learnt by God's good grace to delight in holiness, purity, and truth? Never let us henceforth encourage in a child the seeds of pride or passion; never indulge in any single sin those little ones, whom our Lord has with such solemn charge committed to the care of his disciples. Never let us transgress in their presence; lest through our ill example they learn to deem lightly of that which God has forbidden. Never let us quarrel, or suffer them to quarrel, never deceive, or suffer them to deceive, never report tales of slander for them to hear, never magnify in their childish estimation the pomps and vanities of the world, by shewing, either in our words or actions, that we too highly esteem them ourselves. And for ourselves, if we have much to regret in the waste of time past, let us the more watchfully redeem the hours which yet remain. Let us employ ourselves the more diligently in the business of our Father which is in heaven. Whatever we have to do, let us do it as his obedient and loving children; as willing to be in all things subject unto Him; as making our worldly work his service, by diligence and honesty, by justice in our dealings, and forbearance in our gains; and as delighting when our work is done, to resort either in private, or in his temple, to Him and to them who minister in his word, "both hearing them, and asking them questions."

The preaching and baptism of John.

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 ¹ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins ;

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, ² The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain

¹ Matt. 3. 1.

² Isa. 40. 3.

³ Matt. 3. 7.

|| Or, meet for.

and hill shall be brought low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be made smooth ;*

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, ¹ O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits || worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father : for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

§ 186. *That we must fear not only punishment but sin.*

In the first verses of this chapter we have very exactly set down the time and place of the first preaching of John the Baptist. By this means it was the more easy for the early Christians to refer to the eyewitnesses of that beginning of the Gospel, and to prove more plainly to all gainsayers the certainty of the facts as they took place. And thus are we also, at this distance of time, better able to give an answer to any one that asks of us a reason of the hope that is in us. See 1 Pet. 3. 15. We might indeed appeal to that inward testimony, which no man can be sure of in another, but which every one might attain to in himself, the testimony of a renewed spirit, of a conscience void of offence, of a heart set upon righteousness. And further, we might point to the divine effects of Christianity, manifest amongst the abundance of iniquity, manifest in the lives of many of its professors, and in the amended condition of the whole Christian world. But besides these two important heads of evidence, we can direct first the attention of the enquirer to plain matters of fact, such as are of all things most hard to misconstrue, and most unlikely to have obtained credit if untrue. How, we may say, except from the report of others, do we become acquainted with nearly all we know ? And what circumstances, in our worldly information, tend more certainly to obviate the risk of being deceived, than the exact mention of time and place ; especially if it be published whilst hundreds and thousands are alive, who must know whether it is correct or not ? Such is the evidence we have, of facts related in the Gospel of Christ. Such is the ground on which we may most certainly know that John did, as here related, come preaching, in the country round about Jordan.

And now let us see in what his preaching consisted. Expressly he gave it to be understood that he was a messenger to prepare the way for One that should come after him. Expressly he described himself to be what Isaiah had foretold, “the voice of one that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Isa. 40. 3. His appearance and ministry was therefore a certain sign that the Lord here intended was at hand. And from the matter of his preaching might in like manner be collected, what kind of king was about to appear, and what kind of kingdom He would set up. John preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” This we should remember, however familiar to us, was a new and strange doctrine, both to Jews and Gentiles, unheard of in the world at that time. And most marvellous must have sounded to all hearers the tidings that such forgiveness was at hand ; and that, not for one people, but for all ; “all flesh” should “see the salvation of God.”

The opening of this mercy to the Gentiles is especially signified, in what John said to the Jews, that God was able of the very stones “to raise up children unto Abraham.” And as there was nothing which even the apostles of Christ were more slow to believe, so there was nothing more fit for John to preach in preparation for the Gospel, than this purpose of the Almighty to extend it to all mankind. Whilst, therefore, we take gladly to ourselves this early proof of a design so gracious in our behalf, let us apply also to our own lives the express condition of God’s mercy ; let us observe that in the preaching of Christ’s messenger, repentance without amendment is as a tree without fruit, fit only to be “hewn down and cast into the fire.” “To flee from the wrath to come” is natural to every man who is aware of its coming. To be afraid of punishment, to be anxious if possible to escape it, is no more than may be felt by those, who all the while remain a “generation of vipers.” We must be afraid, not of wrath only, but of sin. We must be sorry, not because we have put ourselves in peril, but because we have done dishonour to God. We must repent, so as to be renewed, so as to bring forth new fruit, that healthful, and sound, and pleasant frame of life, which is at once edifying to man, and acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

John testifieth of Christ.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, 'He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, || Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your † wages.

15 And as the people were in ‡ expectation, and all men § mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy

to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

19 ^a But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, 'it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

¹ James 2. 15. ¹ John 3. 17. || Or, Put no man in fear. † Or, allowance. ‡ Or, in suspense. § Or, reasoned, or, debated.
² Matt. 3. 11. ³ Matt. 14. 3. ⁴ Matt. 3. 13.

§ 187. *The obligations of Christian baptism.*

When John urged upon his hearers the necessity of bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance, they asked him each with earnest anxiety, "What shall we do then?" When we hear John's testimony, when we learn in the Gospel of Christ the obligations to repentance and faith; let us ask with like desire to know, let us ask with full purpose to practise what is told us; let us ask, "what shall we do then?" The answer of the Baptist to these anxious inquirers expressed not the whole of their duty, but some few particulars of immediate importance to each. And though we may learn much more, on every one of these heads, from the words of our Lord and his apostles, we shall do well to consider first the instructions of John to the people, the publicans, and the soldiers. Each class he either warned against those very sins in which each was most tempted to transgress, or exhorted to the performance of those duties in which each was most apt to fail.

The people, who were for the most part the poor, he bid relieve out of their poverty the wants of each other. So far is the having little from being sufficient excuse for not giving much, that he who has but meat and a coat to spare, had better give them to him that has none, than enjoy them by himself. The publicans John instructed to exact no more than that which was appointed to them; not meaning but that there were many more fruits of repentance which they must endeavour to bring forth, but urging them as their first and most important duty to be just in their collection of the taxes. The soldiers too in like manner he warned, not at once of all that was unchristian in their conduct, but of what was then most prevalent and most wicked in their profession, an overbearing, and quarrelsome, and discontented temper. Let us in our repentance, first amend what we first and most plainly know to be wrong. As we improve we shall know more, and shall have more to improve; not only not accusing falsely, but seeking and making peace, not only not exacting wrongfully, but cheerfully submitting to be wronged; not only giving out of our superfluity, but labouring and working with our hands, that we may have to give to him that needeth. See Eph. 4. 28.

St. John in preparing the way for Christ ran some risk of being mistaken for Him whose messenger he was. He therefore gave public testimony to one who should come after him mightier than himself, who should baptize, not with water only, but "with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." This means with the Holy Ghost, appearing like to fire, in his descent on the apostles. See Acts 2. 3. And in these words is described also the power of that baptism which Christ instituted, and which is administered by his appointment among all nations of mankind. Not with water only, but with the Holy Ghost have we ourselves been in infancy baptized; with fire, that should make to glow within us the warmth of devout and disinterested love. Else will the holy spark then communicated to our souls rise up in the judgment against us. Else shall we as useless chaff, be so much the more surely, for the privileges we have abused, given over to the unquenchable fire, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9. 44.

The more to honour the rite of baptism, which He designed to enjoin on his disciples, our Lord graciously submitted to it Himself. And in an instant He was proclaimed from heaven to be the Son of God Most High, in whom the Almighty Father is well pleased. Thanks be to God that through the same Jesus Christ He is well pleased also in us! Thanks be to God that through Him our sins are forgiven, and our unprofitable service graciously received! Thanks be to God, that we too are now sons, if only like sons we love, sons of God, and heirs with Christ, heirs through Him of everlasting life!

The Genealogy of Christ.

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,

24 Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,

25 Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Naggæ,

26 Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda,

27 Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri,

28 Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,

29 Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,

30 Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,

31 Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,

32 Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naason,

33 Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda,

34 Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor,

35 Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala,

36 Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech,

37 Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Muleleel, which was the son of Cuinan,

38 Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

§ 188. *That time is short in respect of eternity.*

The genealogy of Christ is the list of his fathers according to the flesh. It is carefully set down both by St. Matthew and St. Luke. The former tells us the parentage of our blessed Lord through Joseph, by his father Jacob, see Matthew 1. 16, whilst St. Luke reckons it through Mary, by her father Heli, of whom Joseph is here said to be the son, that is, the son in law. Or rather, strictly speaking, he is said to be "of Heli;" there being in the original neither "son" nor "son in law" between which "was," and "of Heli." And this, it should be remembered, is always the case with the words which in our Bibles are in a different print. They are such as in the original it was usual to understand, but which in our language it is necessary to express, and which are therefore supplied by the translators. And that son in law was here properly understood seems plain from its being said before of Jesus, that He was, "as was supposed, the son of Joseph." For this is as though St. Luke had said, that He was not really Joseph's son, but only the son of Mary, Joseph's wife, and therefore Mary's father, not Joseph's, would have to be mentioned next. And this matter becomes clear when we consider, that St. Luke wrote his Gospel after St. Matthew's, which he supposes to be previously known. And it being therein set down that "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary," there could be no doubt that Joseph was not the son "of Heli," except by marriage. Thus we have here the whole extraction of Mary; and thus Jesus is shewn to be by his mother's side naturally, as well as legally by the genealogy of her husband, "the son of David, the son of Abraham." And this point it was important to establish, because the early Scriptures had so expressly determined the family in which the Saviour of the world should be born. And the Jews, as we find in the Old Testament, had their pedigrees very carefully preserved, with a view to their satisfaction in this particular. So that every instance, in which we find these long lists of names from father to son, may serve, as they occur, to remind us, what care God had taken beforehand to satisfy mankind, when Jesus should be born, that He was "very Christ." In each succeeding generation the line is drawn closer and closer, the time becomes shorter and shorter, within which it is decreed in the divine counsels that the Saviour of the world should be manifest in the flesh. The sceptre is now ready to depart from Judah. See Gen. 49. 10. Of the four great empires foretold by Daniel, the last is now established throughout the earth. See Dan. 7. 23. And that universal peace, of which Isaiah prophesied, chap. 2. 4, is now known for the first time in the history of the world. Thus whilst "one generation passeth away and another cometh," Eccles. 1. 4, the purposes of the Almighty stand ever sure. The actions of mankind, whether kings or peasants, whether their wars or marriages, are freely chosen. But the design of God is in all fulfilled. And through ages, which to us seem countless, the love of God is compassing one single end, the redemption of mankind through Christ.

Christ is tempted in the wilderness.

1 And ¹Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

¹ Matt. 4. 1.

7 If thou therefore wilt || worship me, all shall be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

11 And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone,

12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

|| Or, *fall down before me.*

§ 189. *The perseverance and falsehood of our spiritual enemy.*

There can be no doubt that our Lord when in the wilderness was alone. This temptation therefore could have been made known to the evangelists only by his own relation, or by the express revelation of the Holy Ghost. Yet in St. Matthew's Gospel we find the particulars set down in a different order from that in which they occur here in St. Luke. And on a comparison, it is evident from St. Matthew's saying, "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city," Matt. 4. 5, that the temptation here mentioned third, took place in reality the second. For St. Luke uses no such word as "then;" but relates the three events, without referring to their order, which was obviously a matter of indifference. And it would be our own mistake to imagine that he meant, what he has no where said, that the one which he relates last happened subsequently to the second. Hence let us be warned against ever supposing two passages of Scripture to contradict each other, merely because at first sight they seem not to agree. Nor let us expect of the sacred writers a minute attention to the order of events, in a case where the order was immaterial. Rather, from their silence on such slight particulars, let us learn to fix our whole attention on the practical importance of what they wrote.

It was in the solitude of the wilderness that our Lord met with these temptations. And thither He "was led by the Spirit," after his baptism in Jordan, when "full of the Holy Ghost." Retirement is often much to be desired after our acts of most solemn devotion; after our daily prayers, our public worship, and our receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At such seasons it is well for us to commune with our own hearts, the world and its vanities shut out, and to commune with Almighty God, in whose presence we at all times are. Only let us not think that even in retirement we are safe from spiritual danger. There also is our adversary the devil, prepared, as against our Lord of old, to spread against our unwary souls the snares of pride and of presumption. Nor though for once we should succeed in resisting this evil adversary, must we ever, as long as life continues, relax our watchfulness or exertions. Satan, as we here learn, is never weary of ill doing. Driven from one point of attack he is immediately prepared for another. And when he "had ended all the temptation," it was but "for a season" that he departed from our Lord.

And now observe the falsehood of what the tempter urges. "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." As if God had aetnally given up to him all ordering of this world's affairs! As if he had any thing more allowed him, than permission for a time, and within strait limits, and for good ends, to tempt the children of men! But he was a liar from the beginning. See Gen. 3. 4, 5. And the like he continues to this present time. To the lover of pleasure his words are still the same, "All this will I give thee." To the covetous, to the ambitious, to the vain, to the worldlyminded, he still whispers of wealth, and fame, and praise, and comfort, "All this will I give thee." When in truth he can give nothing but the wages that are appropriate to sin, even sorrow, and sickness, and death. Only evil can the evil one bestow; and to evil he can wrest even every good gift. Thus even Scripture he can turn to a false application, and make that which was written for encouragement of faith, to be a ground of pride and presumption. Thus would he have us tempt God; not by putting too much, but too little trust in Him, by forgetting that He is wise and just, as well as gracious, and merciful, and longsuffering.

Never may we so tempt our heavenly Father! Never may we so misconstrue his precious promises! Never may we quote heedlessly his sacred word! Never may we fail to count it for glad tidings of great joy; or to use it, as our Lord has here set us the example, for the rule and guide of our lives.

Christ beginneth to preach in Galilee.

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

16 And he came to ¹ Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

¹ Matt. 13. 54.

18 ² The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

² Is. 61. 1.

§ 190. *The acceptable year of the Lord.*

When Jesus had been in vain assailed by the tempter, and was about to begin his public ministry, He "returned by the power of the Spirit into Galilee." This means that his returning in that direction was not the result of his own choice as being a man, but the dictate of the Holy Ghost; with whom as God He is ever One. Here by his words and works He produced a great impression on the people; "and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." Thus the general attention was aroused: and we may be the more certain in all that follows, that the facts, being known in so public a manner, could not have been misrepresented.

On our Lord's coming unto Nazareth, He entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Of these synagogues it is certain that they were not appointed in the law of Moses. And there is good reason to believe that they were unknown among the Jews previous to the carrying away into Babylon. For how, if there had been synagogues in use, how could the copies of the law have been so scarce as they had become in the reign of Josiah? Their use appears to have grown up in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Afterwards they were erected commonly throughout the country, as churches are amongst ourselves, and used much in the same manner for prayer, and for reading and expounding the word of God. And to their regular use it is justly attributed, that whereas previous to the Babylonish captivity the Jews were grievously addicted to idolatry, they were ever afterwards utterly averse to it. So little "communion hath light with darkness!" 2 Cor. 6. 14. So great are the advantages of constant attendance on divine worship! So profitable herein was the example of Christ, who, "as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day!"

The passage of Isaias, which Christ turned to, and read, on this opening of his ministry at Nazareth, describes the office He came to fulfil, and the benefits which He proposed to confer on the whole race of mankind. We were all poor, wanting in the first necessities of spiritual life; and He was anointed, that is, sent by divine appointment, to preach the Gospel to the poor, to make us rich in knowledge, rich in grace, and whether poor or rich in this world, rich in the promise of eternal life. Brokenhearted we must needs have been, to have no hope of health or safety, no prospect of escaping the wrath due to sin. But He was sent to heal us; to give us, as in the prophet is more fully written, "the oil of joy for mourning;" Isaias 61. 3; instead of sorrow in our broken hearts, to give us a cheerful sense of his forgiveness, and a faithful conviction of his love. Captive we were to sin and death, in bondage to our own unruly passions, entangled by the snares of Satan, and if not otherwise incapable, restrained from doing good by the servile fear of man. But He preached to us the perfect law of liberty, opened to us the way of righteousness, taught us to renounce the world, to resist the devil, and to obey from that love of God and man, which when perfect "casteth out fear." 1 John 4. 18. Blind too we were, unable to see things heavenly, unable to conceive of God, but as of one like ourselves, or of heaven but as a continuance of a life like to our own. But Christ has brought life and immortality to light. See 2 Tim. 1. 10. He has shewed us the Father in shewing us Himself. See John 14. 9.

Now then we may do well to reflect, each within himself, this is "the acceptable year of the Lord." This is that season of God's last dispensation, which compared with eternity is not a single year; and in which each span of human life is scarce an hour or a moment in the estimate of truth. Shall we for so short a season grudge to wait, when our joy is to last for ever? Shall we for so short a season spare to work, when our work is the work of love? This day is this Scripture fulfilled in our ears. Our turn is now come to hear it. The day of our fathers is gone by. The acceptable year of all mankind is fast drawing to its close. Let us fasten our eyes on Him, whose word, if we believe, will be made good, in the healing of our hearts, in the recovering of our sight, and in the deliverance of our souls from captivity. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6. 2.

Christ is thrust out of Nazareth.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No¹ prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth,² many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a

¹ Matt. 13. 57.² 1 Kings 17. 9.³ 2 Kings 5. 14.

|| Or, edge.

⁴ Matt. 7. 29.

widow.

27³ And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisens the prophet: and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.

29 And rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the || brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: ⁴ for his word was with power.

§ 191. *The peril of privileges.*

They who heard our Lord discourse in the synagogue of Nazareth "all bare him witness;" that is, openly expressed their admiration of what He said. Yet in the very next breath they inquired, "Is not this Joseph's son?" meaning to make his lowly birth an excuse for not believing and doing as He taught. Wherein we see that it is one thing to be pleased with preaching, another to profit by it. And we should hence take warning, lest, whilst we are struck with the words of grace and truth, we find ever some plausible excuse for not applying them to the improvement of ourselves. Who can help being delighted with scripture doctrine, when faithfully and forcibly set forth? Who can fail to feel exalted by the glad intelligence that we are become the sons of God, and have had thrown open to us the kingdom of heaven? But how many are content with the brief feeling of the hour, and return from God's house, and from the hearing of his word, to the practice of the things which are abomination in his sight! How few, when they hear, believe, do what they learn, and perform what they resolve!

Christ reproves this instance of spiritual indifference in the natives of Nazareth; forestalling what they were ready to have said to Him, and pointing out the folly of their excuses. Because He had not wrought in Nazareth the miracles they had heard of in Capernaum, therefore, by way of excuse in their unbelief, they would have applied to Him the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself;" meaning, Heal first those nearest to thine own home. Against this notion He contended by the examples of Elijah and Elisha; two of whose most signal miracles had been vouchsafed not to Jews, but to a widow of Sidon, and to a captain of the host of Syria. See 1 Kings 17. 2 Kings 5. And in like manner, He implied, He would shew forth his own marvellous works, not to such as conceived they had most right to behold them, but to such as God should in his own wisdom choose for witnesses of the truth.

See here, how it is for no worthiness of ours that we enjoy that full measure of Christian light which it has pleased God to vouchsafe to this age and nation! No Capernaum there is in all the world, of which we can complain, that we have heard of things done there, that have not been done amongst ourselves. Wrongfully we should complain if there were. For which of all these blessings have we ourselves deserved? And what deserts of ours could gainsay the convincing question: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Rom. 9. 21. Is it not the obvious prerogative of Him, who made us and redeemed us, to determine under what degree of light, in what circumstances of spiritual poverty or wealth, we should each of us be born and brought up? One thing is certain, that the higher are the privileges which we have been predestinated to enjoy, and the more utterly we feel unworthy of enjoying them, the more deeply are we bound to be thankful in our hearts and lives to the Giver of all good things.

And not thankful only, but watchful should we hence learn ever to be, when we see how divine truth, if it fail to enlighten and convert the soul, is apt to provoke it to aggravated sin. The men of Nazareth, the very same who "bare him witness" and wondered at the grace of his words, when they heard the rebuke of Jesus, "rose up, and thrust him out of the city; and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." The men of this world, when they hear God's word faithfully set forth, instead of being angry with themselves, are apt to be indignant at the teacher who reproves their particular offences. Each would have his own sin spared; and then all others may be freely censured. All doctrines may be acceptably preached, save the one which is most unpalatable to each man's own taste. Whilst Christ is by such as these rejected, may He dwell in our hearts by faith! May we thankfully receive his hardest sayings; and prefer to the flattery of the world, and to the smooth tidings of false prophets, these truths most unwelcome to our carnal thoughts, that only on repentance is sin forgiven. that only by Christ crucified are sinners saved!

Christ casting out the devils suffereth them not to speak.

33 ¹ And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

34 Saying, || Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

38 ² And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

¹ Mark 1. 23.

|| Or, away.

² Matt. 8. 14.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 ³ And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not * to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

³ Mark 1. 34.

* Or, to say that they knew him to be Christ.

§ 192. *The vanity of profession without practice.*

The words of the unclean spirit, whom our Lord, when in the synagogue, cast out, express feelings which it is to be feared are not uncommon among those to whom his healing influence is offered. "What have we to do with thee?" is the thought, if it be not often the very answer of a sinner, each time that he is taxed with his offence. Whether it be the minister of religion who reproves him, or the friend of his bosom who kindly points out his faults, or conscience, which is God speaking in his heart, whom no force can silence, no secrecy deceive; in any case the reflection is ready to arise, for there is an evil spirit ever ready to suggest it, "What have we to do with thee?" Let us observe then who it is that we are thus tempted to reject, when we refuse good counsel, or suppress good thoughts. It is Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God. It is He, who, by his Spirit, by his word, by the voice of a minister, or by the influence of a friend, would cast out the evil spirits which possess our souls, would heal the fever of which we else must perish everlastingly.

What a sad spectacle must have been all these sick persons, with divers diseases, brought together unto Christ! And how is it that we see daily, without fear and sorrow, the like signs of Satan's work, in sin wasting the strength of the soul? How hear we without dismay like sounds of Satan's voice, in each oath the swearer utters, in each envious, angry, idle word, which they who swear not, venture to express? Where pride or passion prevails over Christian principle, there is fever. Where the love of this world's pleasure casts out the love of God, there is plague and pestilence. Where covetousness takes place of charity, where present enjoyment chills heavenly hope, where sense is triumphant over faith, there is the evil spirit in possession. And how is it that we fear not to approach? How is it that we seek not more anxiously our brother's healing, care not more earnestly for our own greater safety? Surely we do not thoroughly believe that "he that committeth sin is of the devil;" 1 John 3. 8; that they who do the things God has forbidden, shall not inherit eternal life. Surely we must have some lurking hope, that to be called a Christian is a sufficient title to the heaven, which is set forth for us to seek.

Let us then, in the instance of these devils, observe the vanity, and worse than vanity, of knowledge without obedience, of profession without practice. Ready they were to own, "Thou art Christ the Son of God." But Jesus, in the miracles here recorded, rebuked them, and suffered them not to speak. Hateful, rather than acceptable unto Him, is the confession of Christian faith which is unconnected with devotion to his service. Better it were not to name his name at all, than to name it without departing from iniquity. See 2 Tim. 2. 19. Our lips can bear no acceptable testimony to his truth, whilst our lives are in opposition to his will. It is the obedience of the heart that must confess Him for the Christ. Our hands more diligent to do good, our feet more firm to walk in uprightness, our ears more swift to hear for profit, our tongues more slow to speak for harm, our thoughts more kind to each other, our tempers more gentle, our passions more subdued, our whole frame of life and conversation more holy, more heavenly minded; these are the only voices which without offence may say to Him, "I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God."

God grant that our works may thus speak his praise; and our hearts with thankfulness return his love, whilst our lips confess his name! God make us sensible, in all we see, that sin is the worst of sickness, the most grievous possession of body and of soul! God teach us to say and feel, ever as we hear the tidings of redemption through Christ, not, "what have we to do with thee," but rather, what can we do without Thee, Jesus Thou son of God?

Christ ordereth a miraculous draught of fishes.

1 And ⁱ it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennessaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake : but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing : nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they enclosed a

great multitude of fishes : and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken :

10 And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

ⁱ Matt. 4. 18.

§ 193. *That we must work in faith, and be humble in success.*

In this miracle we see the difference between working without Christ, and working with Him. "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing;" this is the result in the first case. This is the true character of all plans of life undertaken with no Christian motive, and with no prayer for Christian grace; labour without fruit, toil and taking nothing, vanity and "vexation of spirit." Eccles. 1. 14. Few could faithfully survey their past years without acknowledging the truth of this account. What are we the wiser; what the better, what the happier, for the chief part of the time we have spent hitherto on earth, and for what we have all the while been doing? Will the things we have been employed in give us peace at the last? Do they give us comfort or satisfaction at this hour? So far as they do, it must be as far as we have believed, have obeyed, have loved Christ our Lord; it must be as far as we have wrought with Him, and He with us. So far as they do not, but rather fill us in the recollection with shame and regret, it is because we have neglected the service of Christ, and have been living without God in the world. And this we are continually tempted to do: the objects of each sense, and the events of each passing hour, continually engrossing our attention, and withdrawing it from the only one thing really needful.

How different is the result when we work with the aid of Christ, when we let down the net at his word, with lively faith in his gracious promises, with sincere intent to fulfil his will! "And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes." Immediately their work prospered. The very same net, and in the very same waters, which all night long had taken nothing, now fills at once both the ships, "so that they began to sink." Hereupon our Lord takes occasion to signify that He had wrought this miracle, not for the mere supply of their bodily wants, but for the encouragement of their faith in his spiritual service. "And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Hence we should be warned, not to look for the fruit of Christ's working with us, in the abundance of earthly prosperity. Most times all these things are largely added unto those, who seek first the kingdom of God; always, in such measure and degree as is safe for them and seasonable. But though in the midst of such plenty and prosperity their net begin to break, or the ship to sink, it is their joy to be assured that their labour nevertheless is not in vain, their success is sure in the ocean of eternity. And all this world's comforts they therefore resign without a murmur, as knowing that they must yield them up at last, and as trusting through the merits of Christ to be hereafter more than recompensed.

"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord:" these are the words of Peter at the sight of his success; this is the reflection of each humble soul that is conscious of being blest with God's gifts of grace. Humility has been said to be like a vine, that is bowed down to the earth, by the abundance of its own precious fruit. The nearer a man approaches to being a saint, the more he is aware that he is a sinner. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." We are not worthy of the least of all thy mercies. That Thou shouldest have come down from heaven to dwell on earth, we are not worthy, O Lord. That Thou shouldest for us have been made man, and lived, and died, and risen again from the dead, we are not worthy, O Lord. That Thou shouldest still plead for us in heaven, there still love us, and thence still help us by thy grace, we are not worthy, O Lord. Depart, for in thy presence we are filled with shame; depart, yet not so, for in thy departure we perish everlastingly. Be not Thou then, O Lord, far from us; O Lord, haste Thee to help us. Come nigh, and dwell among us. Depart not, nor let us depart from Thee, for ever.

Christ healeth the leper, and one sick of the palsy.

12 ¹ And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

13 And he put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

17 And it came to pass, on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them.

18 ² And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought *means* to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him.

¹ Matt. 8. 2.

19 And when they could not find by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with *his* couch into the midst before Jesus.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

21 And the Scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

23 Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

² Matt. 9. 2.

§ 194. *That we should be filled with amazement at God's mercy.*

In the former of these miracles we should note the divine authority with which our Lord replies, "I will: be thou clean." Herein we have it plainly signified that of his own will He healed the leper. And we may conceive it to be further implied, that whom He will He now makes whole, by the healing of his grace. "And he charged him to tell no man." This means that he should not publish the matter for his own glory, nor talk in a vain and boastful manner, as he would naturally be tempted to do, of the wonderful cure he had received. But he was bound to ascribe the glory to God; and for this end he was instructed to go and shew himself to the priest.

In the second of these miracles, we may observe how graciously our Lord discerns acceptable faith, in the bringing unto Him, through the housetop, the sick of the palsy. This behaviour might in many instances have been counted for a rude intrusion. And it was indeed the very reverse of the conduct which the centurion in another case pursued, saying, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." Chap. 7. 6. But proceeding from the like principle of trust in Christ, it received from Him, who could discern the heart, the same kind construction, and bounteous reward. And to us it furnishes this useful lesson, that we should think no evil; but always ascribe to the best motive we can imagine, what we witness or experience in each other.

'Till were these lessons of Christian charity understood by the assembled Pharisees, who "sat by," as it should seem, to find fault with our Lord, rather than to profit by his teaching. "Who is this," say they, "which speaketh blasphemies?" a most evil construction to put upon the most gracious of all words that ever sounded in the ears of man, "Thy sins are forgiven thee!" "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" a most true conclusion, establishing, from the mouth of an enemy, that He who did these things must be no less than God! For the event proved that these words of our blessed Lord were with power. The healing of the sick of the palsy compelled the very Pharisees, with the rest, to acknowledge, "We have seen strange things to day."

Such when the day of judgment shall arrive, such will be the confession extorted from every one who now judges uncharitably of his neighbours. Here if we think evil of each other, there we shall be both surprised, and ashamed, to find the extent of our mistakes. Publicans and harlots will there often be preferred to those who while on earth pronounced their condemnation. Such is the force of that gracious sentence, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Oh, if here we have attained unto that heavenly pardon, let us not fail to glorify God, let us not be wanting in due fear and admiration at his work so full of mercy to our souls. The palsy we may not see healed. We may not behold the helpless rise up and walk. But is it nothing to have our weakness supported by God's grace? Is it nothing to have our sins forgiven? Is it nothing to be enabled to walk in God's commandments? Is it nothing to be assured by his word, that we shall rise from death to life eternal? These mercies if we were to feel duly, this healing if we were to value as we ought, in ourselves, and in the thousands who partake of them around us, we should be ready to acknowledge each time that we reflect on them: "We have seen strange things to day."

Christ calleth Levi, eateth with publicans.

27 ¹ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom : and he said unto him, Follow me.

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners ?

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

33 And they said unto him, ² Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees ; but thine eat and drink ?

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

36 And he spake also a parable unto them ; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old ; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles ; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38 But new wine must be put into new bottles ; and both are preserved.

39 No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new : for he saith, The old is better.

¹ Matt. 9. 9.

² Matt. 9. 14.

§ 195. *How far Christians are allowed to feast.*

Levi here spoken of was St. Matthew, the writer of the earliest Gospel. He was a publican, that is, a receiver of the public taxes, paying a rent for them to the Roman government. These dues were extremely odious among the Jews, as reminding them of their subjection to a foreign power. And this method of collecting them often tempted the collectors to be oppressive, for their own greater gain. Thus the very name of publican was held in general aversion and contempt. And thus Christ, in selecting Levi for an apostle, has shewn us, that with God there is no respect of persons, or of trades, or of employments. It is enough that a man pursues honestly and charitably whatsoever calling he is used to ; until at least he knows better from God's word. It is enough that he is ready, when so persuaded, to renounce all he here has, or hopes to have, for the sake of an employment more according to God's will.

Nor did our blessed Lord think it needful to refuse the entertainment which was made on the occasion, though the company consisted chiefly of men engaged in the like worldly occupation. And for this conduct He accounted by a proverb of very obvious application, "They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick." And what pains does a faithful physician grudge, what risk does he refuse to run, what loathsome disease does he forbear to examine, if he may by any means assist to relieve it ? Such is our Lord's attention to our souls in their afflicted state of sin. Such is his condescension to our weakness and our wants, his concern for us in our most offensive transgressions. However deep then be the wounds of our iniquity, let us apply in prayer unto Him, with an entire reliance on his willingness to heal. Let us not in any false presumption conceive ourselves to be righteous ; but own that we are miserable sinners ; for such did He come to save.

The Pharisees being thus answered, find a new objection against Jesus, complaining, as the disciples of John also found fault, Matt. 9. 13. that He should on any occasion, and in any company, partake of such social entertainments. For Himself He had already explained that He had an eye to the conversion of those amongst whom He feasted. For his disciples He remarks, that when He should hereafter be taken away from them, "then shall they fast in those days." And this was soon and signally fulfilled, as we read in St. Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 4. 11, "We both hunger and thirst, and are naked." Meanwhile it was fitting for the disciples to take share of such festivity as was offered them, on this ground ; that the enjoyment of God's creatures is a fit instance of thankfulness to Himself. And it was no more to be expected that they should purposely refuse such occasions of sober enjoyment, than that men who have been drinking old wine would return to that which is inferior, namely new. So that social entertainment is both allowed by our Lord to his disciples, and pronounced to be, when compared with fasting, in some sense, and on some occasions, better.

How far then may we apply this allowance to ourselves, living as we do in times when the Bridegroom has been taken away from us ; though exempt from the pressure of public persecution ? We are bound, it should seem, sometimes to fast, and sometimes we may be permitted also to feast. But when we feast, let it be so far only as we could conceive that the heavenly Bridegroom would sanction ; so far as his presence, discerned ever by lively faith, is no hindrance to our joy ; so far only as we believe that his disciples, and He Himself, feasted ; so far only as like them we may mingle in our mirth the thoughts of Christian thankfulness, the words of Christian counsel ; so far only as we may feel reasonable hope, that the Giver of all good things looks down with pleasure on our thankful use of them, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ justifieth his disciples, and healeth on the Sabbath day.

1 And ¹it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing *them* in *their* hands.

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?

3 And Jesus answering them^{*} said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him;

4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

6 ² And it came to pass also on another sabbath,

that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

¹ Matt. 12. 1.

² Matt. 12. 9.

§ 196. *The time and manner of keeping the Christian Sabbath.*

The two transactions here recorded may serve the better, when taken together, to explain to us the nature of the Christian sabbath. On this day of holy rest, as observed and enforced by our blessed Lord, it is lawful to do works of necessity, it is lawful to do works of charity. The disciples might pluck the ears of corn and eat; they might satisfy by this plainest of food their urgent hunger. Their Master too might heal the man that had a withered hand, that is to say, might do good, might save life. And these things He justified to the captious Pharisees, in the one case, by an example taken from their own history, in the other by the signal miracle which He performed. David had been excused by hunger when "he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him." See 1 Sam. 21. 6. And Pharisees, who found no fault with David, should have found no fault with the disciples. And if Christ could on the sabbath day make whole a hand that had been long withered, the Pharisees might be sure, and we too may be sure, that He was "Lord also of the sabbath."

That He is so, has been proved by the alteration which has taken place in the order of the day observed, and in the manner of observing it, under the authority of Christ, and of his apostles. There is no sufficient evidence in Scripture as to which day of the week, according to our present reckoning was the original sabbath of the patriarchs. By the Jews, under the revelation of their law, it was kept on the day which we now call the seventh. To the patriarchs it signified God's rest after creation. To the Jews it commemorated, in addition, their deliverance from a state of bondage in Egypt. See Deut. 5. 15. In both cases there was enjoined entire rest from all work. For before the Law was given, the very manna from heaven, a case of necessary food, was doubled on the sixth day, that it might not be gathered on the seventh. See Exod. 16. 26, 29. And in the Law it was expressly commanded; "Whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death." Exod. 31. 15. Whereas the Christian sabbath commemorates rather our new creation unto God in Christ Jesus, our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and our assurance that we are so delivered, by the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord. Thus it is, as it is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 4. 8, "another day." It signifies, as there argued, the eternal rest secured in the life which is to come, for the people of God. It is "the Lord's day." Rev. 1. 10. It is the day on which our Lord rose from the dead; "for our justification," Rom. 4. 25, that is, by reason of, and in token of, our having been justified by his death. And therefore it is a day to "save life," and not "to destroy it." It is a day when whatever is necessary for any good purpose may be lawfully, and thankfully performed. Nay, it is the fittest of all days for works of mercy, charity, and piety. For so hath St. Paul instructed us, writing thus to the Corinthians, in reference to their collection of charitable contributions, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." 1 Cor. 16. 2.

"And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus." Thus often the little good we were able to attempt or do, moves in those who witness it, if they are averse to our success, only censure, jealousy, and scorn. And thus madly is the liberty, which Christ has given us in his sabbath, abused by them, who love Him not, to their greater indulgence in profaning it. May we on the contrary, be moved by his mercy, to hallow it, as He has here instructed us! More largely, as this day returns, may we stretch forth for good our withered hands! More freely may we commune with each other, on this day, what we may "do to Jesus," by help given to the poor who are in his stead, by food or raiment, by instruction or example, to the hungry, the naked, or the ignorant; of whom He has so plainly declared, that whatsoever we do unto one of the least of these his brethren, we do unto Him. See Matt. 25. 40.

Christ chooseth his twelve apostles.

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: ¹ and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon called Zelotes,

¹ Matt. 10. 1.

16 And Judas ² the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

² Jude 1.

§ 197. *The Christian ministry an ordinance of Christ.*

How often do the lovers of pleasure continue all night long awake in the enjoyment of mirth and good fellowship! How gladly do the lovers of money both rise up early, and late take rest, that they may increase their store, or reckon up their gains! How wise in their generation are the children of this world! How foolish in theirs the children of light! See chap. 16. 8. How few of us can remember any single instance, in which, for prayer or praise to God, we have gone out to any distance, put ourselves to any inconvenience, or devoted to our heavenly work even so much as a single hour of our night's ordinary rest!

This retirement of our Lord should teach us, in what spirit we might best take in hand any matter of weight and importance. He was about to choose on the morrow his twelve apostles; and therefore "he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." We cannot too watchfully or too patiently make known our requests unto God; more especially in case of those wants which concern our spiritual welfare. And on the other hand we may hence justly argue, what an important matter the choice of these apostles was considered by our Lord. It was indeed by their means that He designed to make known his Gospel to the world. They were his ministers ordained to preach, and to baptize; and also to appoint others after them, with powers of the like nature. And from them are descended, in this spiritual succession, the bishops, priests and deacons, who minister in his authorized Church. Unto them therefore should the flock of Christ look always with respect, as unto his ordinance, and that, of like efficacy with his written word, for their correction and instruction in righteousness.

They have indeed, as the apostle writes, "this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Cor. 4. 7. They are men of the same frailty with those whom they instruct. And so were also the apostles themselves; among whom, after all our Lord's earnest prayer, was "Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor." And this might be allowed, on purpose to correct our tendency to lean upon the ministers of religion, for that support which is to be found only in Christ Himself. It might be on purpose to teach us, that as He only laid down his life for the flock, so He only is the true Shepherd; see John 10. 11; He the only true Priest, who made atonement once for all in behalf of all our sins. And if many notwithstanding take offence at the infirmities of their teachers, and question how such means as the ministry of sinful men, can help in the edification or salvation of their brethren; we must answer in the words of St. Paul, that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 1. 21. It is God's pleasure. It is Christ's ordinance. No further account need be given. For it is an ordinance of which there is most plain record in God's word. It is an ordinance, which can be proved to have continued in use, from the times of the apostles to the present. It is an ordinance, of which the proof lies not in those inward pretensions, which no man can be sure of in another, but in outward visible appointments, such as any man may ascertain to be facts. No further account need be given. No further account should be required.

Rather should all endeavour by a tractable and teachable disposition, to profit, to the uttermost of their power, by the ministry under which they are placed. As this great multitude is here said to have come to Christ "to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases," so should the people resort to Christ's ministers with like desire of cure and of instruction. To hear them, that is, to hear the law at their mouth, the new law of the new covenant, the Gospel of Christ, this is one part of the benefit to be derived from attendance on the ministers of religion. The other is, to be healed of our diseases; by the word they preach, by the sacraments they administer, to have the fever of our passions abated, the foul issue of falsehood and corrupt communication dried up, and health restored to our benumbed affections, and to our perverted will. For these blessings let us resort to the ministers of the Gospel as to an ordinance of Christ, appointed for these ends. Let us in all they do have respect unto Him whose ministers they are. And we might then more largely than we do now, partake of that healing which He can through them impart.

Christ preacheth blessings and woes.

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, 'Blessed *be ye poor*: for your's is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye* that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

¹ Mat. 5. 3.

² Amos 6. 1.

³ Is. 65. 13.

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

24 ² But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

25 ³ Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

§ 198. *The perils and advantages of poverty and of wealth.*

The blessings here pronounced, and the precepts continued to the end of this chapter, are in many respects the same as those in the sermon on the mount, recorded by St. Matthew. But on comparison of the order of events, there is reason to believe that this discourse was delivered on a later occasion. And this might probably be the case with our Lord's most important exhortations, they would be repeated in nearly the same words, either to different hearers, or to the same hearers at different times. Let no one therefore object to hear frequently enforced the same words of doctrine and of duty. That which it is most important for us to know we are least of all apt to bear in mind, and most often therefore need to be reminded of. And there are perhaps none of our Lord's discourses more needful for our right instruction, and for our frequent meditation, than this which we find here repeated.

"Blessed be ye poor," or as it is in St. Matthew, "poor in spirit;" Matt. 5. 3, ye, ~~namely~~, who, if poor, are content; or who would be content, if called to poverty: ye who are content with such things as ye have, and would be, with whatever it might please God to call you to; ye who in lowliness of mind are sensible that there is no poverty so low as your deserts, no want, affliction, or distress more severe than is good for you to bear. "For your's is the kingdom of God." However depressed may be here your condition, however manifold here your afflictions, for you there are prepared, to such as you will be assigned, the riches of God's mercy in Christ, even pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. "Blessed are ye that hunger now," and especially that "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Matt. 5. 6. "For ye shall be filled." Your desires shall be here satisfied, your prayers heard with favourable regard; and hereafter ye shall receive to your full satisfaction such good things as pass man's understanding. Here, if ye, "weep now," and that in hearty repentance for your sins, there shall ye have cause to laugh, there rejoice for evermore. Here, if ye are lifted and reproached by men, rejected from their society, and your very name cast out as evil for the Son of man's sake, rejoice to know that so have they done before to the holiest of mankind; rejoice in the very day of your affliction; rejoice to hope that so much the more exalted, through the merits of Christ, shall be your reward from Him in heaven.

"But woe unto you that are rich," that is to say, woe is laid up for you hereafter; woe unto you that are rich, who enjoy riches without thankfulness, or spend them without anxiety to do good. "For ye have received your consolation," ye in your lifetime have received your good things, and having received them without profit, will be intrusted with no more of God's blessings. "Woe unto you that are full;" who fill yourselves only, or chiefly; fill yourselves, and neglect to fill your brethren. "For ye shall hunger;" ye shall want when they have abundance; ye shall starve when they are fed; and when they are comforted ye shall be tormented. "Woe unto you that laugh now," who live a life of vain amusement, of unhallowed mirth and merriment, who make light of things sacred or of serious people, who make mock at Scripture, or make light of sin. "For ye shall mourn and weep." So much the more for your sinful mirth you will have to sorrow everlastingly. And "woe unto you, when all men speak well of you;" when your behaviour is such as to conciliate the good will of the evil world. For so has it always been that false prophets of smooth things have been welcome, and true prophets of painful things have been hateful to mankind. And so must the united praise of all prove usually in him who prides himself upon it, a sinful compliance with the faults and follies of many.

Thus do these woes, and these blessings also, apply spiritually to all ranks and conditions of men. But especially to the rich, how fearfully do they set forth the perils of having ~~wealth~~ at their command! And especially to the poor, how graciously do they prove the manifold advantages of being poor! And how little of Christian faith can we have, if we can hear these words of our blessed Lord, and continue either to love riches if we have them, or to crave them if we have them not; to spend them selfishly, to waste them foolishly, to hoard them uselessly, or even to give them indiscriminately?

Christ preacheth on giving, loving, and doing good.

27 ¹ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

29 ² And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; ³ and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 ⁴ And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 ⁵ For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 ⁶ And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to

receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

37 ⁷ Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

¹ Matt. 5. 44. ² Matt. 5. 39. ³ 1 Cor. 6. 7. ⁴ Matt. 7. 12. Tobit 4. 15. ⁵ Matt. 5. 46. ⁶ Matt. 5. 42. ⁷ Matt. 7. 1.

§ 199. *How we should be kind on Christian principle.*

Here we have rules of most plain application, in duties of most frequent occurrence; rules of gospel morality, which like the gospel doctrine of the cross, are to them that perish foolishness, but unto them which are saved the power of God and the wisdom of God. See 1 Cor. 1. 18—24. Have we then any enemies, or do we imagine that we have any, who hate, curse, or despitefully use us? Behold, they are not therefore the less entitled to all the offices of Christian charity. And the more we are by nature reluctant to forgive, the more we must endeavour, as we are here strictly enjoined, to love them, do good to them, bless them, and pray for them. Nay, though one should smite us on the cheek, or take away the very clothes we wear; it is the rule of our Christian duty, as the very best thing we could do in such a case, the best for our eternal welfare if, when it is consistent with our other obligations, out of entire love for God and man, we would offer also the other cheek, and submit to lose the coat also. For thus should we fulfil our Lord's command, and thus should we most nearly approach the pattern of our Lord Himself, on whose garments and vesture the like violence was allowed, and in whose sacred person was fulfilled the affecting description of the prophet: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." Isaiah 50. 6.

And this is the right way to interpret also the directions which follow, on giving, and lending, and not receiving again; on forgiving, and not judging, and not condemning; on giving that good measure which we would wish to have measured into our own bosom. For in these directions there is no figure of speech by which their force may be in any degree evaded. Literally we are to love, and literally we are to give and forgive, and so shall we be in reality forgiven. Hard it must be confessed these rules appear to the frailty and the pride of man; hard, as we would that men should do to us, to do "to them likewise;" hard to be "merciful, as our Father also is merciful." Yet this is but one part of what is elsewhere fully expressed: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5. 48. And when we would aim at less than this, let us consider who it is that works in us, and gives us ability "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2. 13. And when we would count for foolishness such arduous rules as these, let us remember what is said, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. 1. 25.

For how else indeed, as our Lord irresistibly concludes, how else would a Christian differ from the man of the world, the servant of God from the servant of mammon? "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye, for sinners also do even the same." Here we see the great difference between acting upon Christian principle, and upon our own private interest or feelings. And this should put us upon examining to which of the two we must ascribe what good we do ourselves, as giving, or as lending, as loving, or as praying for each other. Are not our exertions in this way too apt to be confined to those, who feel the like, or do the like, towards ourselves? Are they not what our own feelings or our own interest would have prompted us to make, though we had not heard these words of Christ our Lord? Let us never then mistake them for Christian charity. Let us never forget that after all such exertions as these, we are no nearer to fulfilling that love, which Christ would have us exercise, even to our worst enemies, for his sake. And as we are ourselves, in being Christians, instances of divine mercy, enemies by nature made friends by grace; let us pray, and endeavour, and practice, to become friends of them who fain would hate us; and by our bounty, kindness, courtesy, and prayers, to make them friends unto ourselves.

Christ finisheth his discourse with the parable of house building.

39 And he spake a parable unto them, ¹ Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

41 ² And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

¹ Matt. 15. 14.

² Matt. 10. 24.

|| Or, shall be perfected as his Master.

³ Matt. 7. 3.

⁴ Matt. 7. 16.

⁵ Matt. 7. 21.

§ 200. *How we must build on the foundation of Jesus Christ.*

To judge or to condemn our neighbours had been forbidden by our Lord in his preceding exhortation, under the penalty, that we should else be ourselves condemned. See ver. 37. By way of further caution, He here shews us that the practice is as though the blind were to set up for being guides to such as are in like affliction. It is presuming also to be above our blessed Master, for He came "not to judge the world, but to save the world." John 12. 47. And the more closely we follow his example, the more diligently we endeavour, not to judge, but to help each other forward, in the things that belong unto salvation, the nearer shall we attain to our Master's own perfection. To judge then, if we could, would be sinful. And because we cannot, it is folly to attempt it. It is proposing to pull the mote out of our brother's eye, when we have all the while a beam in our own. It is bringing forth evil fruit, at the very time that we pretend to be good trees. But "every tree is known by his own fruit;" and the heart of every one by that which is brought out of it. If then we speak evil of each other, if we censure, judge, condemn each other, as this evil speaking comes forth out of our hearts, we are so far from commending ourselves, that we do in fact prove our hearts to be evil.

Yet if we look into our ordinary conversation, how much of it shall we commonly find to be made up of the very topics which are here forbidden! How much of what the mouth speaketh; consists in that leading of the blind, that being above our Master, that pulling out the mote that is in our brother's eye, which are here shewn to be both sin and folly! Yet how else, it will be said, can we converse at all? How discourse at all of our neighbours, if we may never discuss their faults? Many times, no doubt, it will be found difficult. Many times it will require us to be silent; to suppress the ready remark of welcome censure, nay to stifle in the birth the very thought of condemnation. But what then is Christian charity? Is it not that which "thinketh no evil?" 1 Cor. 13. 5. And what is Christian obedience? Is it to say, Lord, Lord; or to do the thing which our Lord hath said? And has He not here taught us how "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and how all judgment of each other, whether expressed by the mouth or conceived by the heart, is absurd, in beings who need to be judged themselves, and is sinful also, most sinful, in the sight of Him, who shall hereafter judge us all?

Behold how necessary unto salvation is the practice of a holy life! Even as a firm foundation unto the safety of a house. Behold how vain are all excuses of disobedience, all nice distinctions of false doctrine, that would exempt a man from doing what Christ has said! Even as a house built without foundation, they shall be swept away in that fearful hour, when the storm of fiery indignation shall devour the adversaries of Christ, those who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth. See Heb. 10. 26, 27. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3. 11. But how can we be counted to lay that foundation, if we make light of Christ's own words, disobey his commands, and excuse ourselves by any means whatever, in hearing his sayings without doing them? How can we be counted to dig deep, and to build our lives upon that holy rock; if we conform not the practice of each hour, the words of our lips, and the very thoughts of our hearts, to the rules which He has here laid down?

God forbid that we should build without foundation, or lay other foundation than Jesus Christ! God forbid that we should build on Him any other than a holy life! God forbid that blind as we are, we should attempt to lead the blind, set up in judging to be above our Master, or pull out the mote from our brother's eye, when we behold not the beam that is in our own!

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

46 ³ And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Christ healeth the Centurion's servant.

1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people ¹ he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself:

for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof:

7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

¹ Matt. 8. 5.

§ 201. *That unworthiness is no reason for not applying to our Lord.*

It was when "he had ended all his sayings," that Christ entered into Capernaum, and wrought the cure of the centurion's servant. His works served to confirm his words. Let us look to it, that our practice be according to our profession; that our hands be as ready to help each other, as our tongues to counsel or reprove. The centurion's servant "was dear unto him." Much more should Christian servants be dear to Christian masters. How know they, either of them, how soon they may be called to another state of being? And how know they which shall then be most exalted? Let each therefore here treat the other with the kindness of Christian brotherhood, delighting both in sickness and in health, to give, as well as to receive, attention and help.

On comparing with this passage the account of the same miracle in St. Matthew, 8. 5, you should observe, that the centurion is there said to have come to Jesus; though here it is plain, that at first at least, he did not go himself, but sent friends with his message in his stead. These friends, being the elders of the Jews, recommended him to our Lord by the mention of his good works, "saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this." But the centurion felt very differently of himself, and sent again, as Christ drew near unto his house, to say, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee." And afterwards, as appears probable from St. Matthew, his anxiety for his servant overcame this reluctance, so that he went and made the same profession for himself. Or it may be, that his sending by his friends, is all that is there meant by his coming unto Christ. For so are the sons of Zedee represented, by St. Mark, to have asked for those places of distinction, which St. Matthew says their mother asked in their behalf. See Matt. 20. 20. Mark 10. 35. And so are we ourselves enabled, through our one great Friend, to do that which we ourselves do not, even to come unto the Father, to know the Father, and to see the Father; see John 14. 6, 7; even "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Heb. 10. 19.

Let us observe then, if we would partake in the success of the centurion, let us observe with what feelings he expressed himself to our Lord. Such was his earnest faith, that he was persuaded Christ was able to heal at a distance; and he resolved to apply to Him, though unworthy of his presence. This shews that he thought Him willing as well as able to heal. And thus ought we to think of our Redeemer, when we become sensible of how deeply we need his help. A conviction that we are unworthy to apply to Him should not hinder us from applying, should not hinder our full assurance, that, if we apply faithfully, He will heal plentifully. And this assurance of God's mercy, made manifest in the Gospel of Christ, we ought to apply to all occasions of drawing nigh to Him, whether in prayer, or reading of his word, hearing it preached by his ministers, or receiving his sacraments at their hands. In none of these cases are we worthy to come unto Almighty God. In none need our unworthiness prevent us, if only we come aware of it, and relying on no worth of ours, but on the merits of our Saviour Christ.

And for this end we may do well to consider our own lives, our lips, our hearts; comparing our present actual proficiency in the graces of the Gospel, with what we are ourselves aware it might have been, with what we are so deeply bound that it should have been. We shall then, through God's blessing on our reflections, see how thoroughly we are at the best unworthy of his love, how surely it is for no worthiness of ours, He loves us, but only for the worthiness of his Son our Lord. Putting therefore our confidence in his merits, we shall have a sure ground of trust whereon to stand, a Friend by whom to send our prayers to God, to ask of Him his heavenly help, to go unto Him in his ordinances, and to hope that He will come and dwell with us. The more we are unworthy, or at least the more we feel ourselves to be so, we shall be the more persuaded that through Christ alone we have access to the Father, and that through Him we may have not access only, but also boldness to approach.

Christ raiseth the widow's son, answereth John's messengers.

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

14 And he came and touched the *||* bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

17 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about.

|| Or, coffin.

18 ¹ And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.

19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

21 And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

¹ Matt. 11. 2.

§ 202. *The duty and the risk of inquiry into divine things.*

The miracles of our Lord often furnish instances of that kind concern for the sufferings of mankind, which He bids us practise each towards his neighbour. Thus it is recorded of the young man, whom they were carrying out dead from the city of Nain, that he was the only son, or as the original may rather mean, a son that was the only child of his mother; "and she was a widow." There must have been many opportunities of raising the dead to life; and yet none appeared to our compassionate Saviour so suitable as this instance of extreme affliction, no person so fitting to be comforted, as this widow, now bereft of her only child. Let us look out then, in the good we have to do, for those cases of distress which we are most bound to relieve. Let us inquire, with anxiety to learn, where the widow and the fatherless are to be found, where the hungry and the naked are to be met with, where the helpless and the ignorant abound; that we may hasten to hold forth to them our Christian sympathy, and our Christian help.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Happy was the son thus restored to the affection of his widowed mother! Happy was the mother who thus recovered from the dead her only child! But how much more happy is that man, who, whether young or old, is stayed by God's grace in his career of sin; who, as his passions are carrying him to the grave of endless perdition, is enabled to hear the voice that saith unto every sinful child of Adam, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" "And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God." Here we see no vain superstition, but a salutary reverence; such fear as ends in love. Strange things and awful we each day behold, in all that goes on around us. Strange things and awful we ought to see, through faith, in the great work of God's grace, going on within our hearts. If we fear, let our fear lead us to the glorifying of God. Let us fear, so as to sin no more. Let us fear, so as not to love the less. Let us fear, so as to spread abroad as widely as we can, our conviction of God's goodness, and of our Saviour's love.

When the rumour of all these miracles came to the ears of John the Baptist, he sent two of his disciples unto Jesus to inquire, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" To this inquiry our Lord replied by curing "many of their infirmities." And He bade the messengers return with a report of the things which they had seen. He bears not witness of Himself, see John 5. 31—37, but the Father from heaven bears witness to the Son. He bears not witness to Himself as the Son of man; but as the Son of God He sets aside the course of nature, heals the sick, gives sight unto the blind, and raises the dead to life. Let each such miracle we hear or read of, remind us that Jesus was "He that should come," convince us that He is our Saviour, his the only Name given under heaven whereby we may have health and salvation.

From the message sent by John, let us learn the duty of inquiring into the truth. From the answer of our Lord, let us learn the peril of inquiry, without honest intention to believe what we may learn. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." There is risk then that we may be offended in Christ. There is risk that we may stumble, may fall, may perish everlastingly. The same rock, on which the salvation of the faithful is established, is a rock of offence to the unbelieving. These are they, who, when they inquire, are bent against receiving the truth; who have beforehand determined how much they will receive, and how much not. Never may we so inquire without meaning to obey! Never may we so read, without desire to mark, learn, and inwardly digest! Never may we be offended in Christ; but through Him rather rise when fallen, walk uprightly in this present life, and in the end be raised from death to glory!

Christ speaketh to the people concerning John the Baptist

24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27 This is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

29 And all the people that heard *him*, and the

|| Or, *frustrated*.

† Or, *within themselves*.

1 Matt. 11. 16.

publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers || rejected the counsel of God † against themselves, being not baptized of him.

31 And the Lord said, 'Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

§ 203. *That we must not, for our own credit, argue perversely.*

Our Lord discourses in this passage on the character of John, and on the waywardness of the Jews in objecting both to Himself and to the Baptist. Of John He first asks the people, "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?" He then mentions several things, most opposite to what John really was, that his character might by these means be the better understood. If a reed shaken with the wind is continually wavering, John, we must understand, was firm, constant to the one great object of his coming, the bearing witness unto Christ. If soft raiment and gorgeous apparel are the signs of self-indulgence, and of worldly greatness, John, we learn by the contrast, denied himself, laboured greatly, and was of low condition in the world. And yet he was a prophet, yea and more than a prophet; he was the messenger to prepare the way of Christ. And this made him the very greatest of all earthly prophets; or so great, that no one was greater, for no one more largely helped to shew forth to mankind that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

The people who heard him, and the publicans who were baptized with his baptism, are here said to have justified God. By their conversion they proved the wisdom of this measure in the divine counsels. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. They rejected, to their own loss, this counsel of God in their behalf. They refused the divine ordinance. They would not profit by the means offered for their conversion unto Christ. This passage, with many others in the Scripture, shews that men have it in some sense in their own choice, either to justify God's counsel, or to reject it against themselves. Never then be you perplexed by the consideration of God's almighty power, so as to suppose it inconsistent with some power also in man. And yet never, on the other hand, so reckon on your own strength, as to suppose you can do any thing, without God's permission, or any thing good without the help of his grace. The power to choose, which each man has, is itself the gift of God; and its exercise is therefore no disparagement to the sovereignty of Him who gave it. He sets before us good and evil. He enables us to will. He commands, He moves, He helps us to choose the better part. But, if we choose the worse, the fault is ours; and ours is the loss for ever.

Nothing could more clearly prove this perversity of will in the Jews, than their pleading such different objections, in excuse for their not believing either the Baptist or our Lord. The one lived a life of abstinence. Him they accused of having a devil; meaning that his behaviour, so unlike that of the world, was the result of possession by an evil spirit. Surely then when Jesus came, not practising the like abstinence, they will find no fault with Him for eating and drinking. Nay, here on the contrary they object, "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" This was acting more like children that were at play, than like men that were in earnest. This was answering as if the object were to justify themselves, and not to save their souls alive. Never let us answer thus perversely. Never let us in argument, or in common conversation, turn aside from the straight path of honesty and truth; never twist the tenour of what we have to say, so as to suit our own purpose for a time. Least of all let us thus talk for victory, when our talk is on things pertaining to eternal life. Rather let us herein feel, how much more than our present credit we have at stake. Our knowledge of God is concerned; and in our knowledge our right faith: and in our faith our right practice. And on ours depends in some degree the Christian progress of all we are connected with. And on ours and theirs together, is allowed, under God's providence, to depend his glory in the justifying of his Gospel to the world; for "wisdom is justified of all her children."

Christ justifieth a woman which had been a sinner.

36 ¹ And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had hidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And *Jesus* answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred \parallel pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly

forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

¹ Mark 14. 3.

\parallel See Matt. 18. 28.

§ 204. *Forgiveness of sins should move us through love to obey.*

In this history, and in the parable of these debtors, we see set forth the whole scheme of God's mercy, as revealed to mankind through Christ. It is this: that He freely forgives sinners, and that they, thus freely forgiven, therefore love Him much. The woman, it is expressly said, was a sinner. And as all have sinned, this must mean, in her case, a state of sin more grievous than ordinary. It was "when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house." She had knowledge then of who Jesus was, and had faith, it seems, that He would help her in her lost estate. She "stood at his feet behind him weeping." She experienced then that godly sorrow for her sins, which worketh repentance unto salvation. And in the washing and anointing of his feet, she proved a willingness to undertake in his service any office however menial, any cost however large or inconvenient. And therefore our Lord remarks to the Pharisee, that her sins were forgiven. And at the same time by way of explaining how it came to pass that "she loved much," He sets forth a parable, which should for ever silence in our hearts all murmuring at God's goodness, unto those whom we deem to be greater sinners than ourselves. Are not our own sins such debts to Almighty God as we can by no means pay? Is not God as that creditor who frankly forgave his debtors? And is not this the very reason why we ought to love God much? And if we were to believe this of Him heartily, should we not thus love him entirely? How then shall we doubt of others that they love thus too? How doubt, if they have had more forgiven, that they love the more? And of whom can we know so much sin as of ourselves? Of whom can we be so sure as of ourselves, that the debt due to God is fearfully large? How gladly, if persuaded of our own forgiveness, should we think of the like mercy being extended to our brethren! How heartily, in proportion as we have been forgiven, should we love, both God who forgave us, and for his sake all others whom we could hope He would forgive!

In this woman we have an example of what such love would lead to, the humbling of ourselves to each other, the labouring and being spent in doing good. But can we follow her example, it may be asked, now that our Lord is no longer upon earth; when we can no more approach his sacred person, anoint Him with precious ointment, or kiss his feet with devout affection? Let us call to mind, if we have the heart inclined, if we have the will to do these things, He has Himself instructed us in the way. It is to consider Christ as present to our faith, in every fellow creature who needs our help. Not only when we relieve the poor with alms, but when we instruct the ignorant with advice: not only when we visit the sick and sorrowful, but when we soothe the angry or the proud: when by a soft answer we turn away wrath, see Prov. 15. 1; or by denial of our own inclinations indulge the wish of those we live with: this is to love Him much. And not only when we thus kindly treat each other, but when we think devoutly of our Lord Himself. If, when we read his word, our hearts burn within us at the tidings of redemption: if, when we pray, we earnestly desire to be conformed to his image; if, when we praise, we are duly thankful for all that He has done for us; if, when we think, we devise ever how to do Him service, to act, and speak, and suffer, and think also, as He would have us: this is to offer kisses and ointment to our Lord, this is to love Him much!

Christ teacheth the parable of the sower.

1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him,

2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, ¹out of whom went seven devils,

3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

4 ² And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear,

¹ Mark 16. 9.

² Matt 13. 2.

let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

11 ³ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the way side are ⁴they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock are *they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are *they*, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are *they*, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience.

³ Matt. 13. 18.

§ 205. *That it is our own fault if we are not converted by the Gospel.*

The things which our Lord preached are here called "the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Let us consider then, are they or are they not, a subject of rejoicing to ourselves? Are we glad, or are we sorry, to think, that the Gospel is surely true? Do we look mostly with fear, or with hope, to the fulfilment of the things, which are therein set forth? The tidings are the same, the tidings are glad, whether we receive them joyfully, or not. If we receive them not joyfully, the fault must lie within ourselves. The seed is in all cases the same; and its failure or success depends on the difference in the condition of the ground.

Does then the heavenly seed, do the word and ordinances of God, bring forth in us their proper fruit, a cheerful, thoughtful, hopeful frame of mind; a delight in things divine; and the practice of ministering of our substance unto Christ, by helping those who are in need? If not, let us examine ourselves, how is it the seed has failed? Let us consider, which of the causes here mentioned is hindering its fruitfulness? Either we are beguiled by the evil spirit, taking away the word out of our hearts. Or else we have no root; our resolutions have no depth or strength; they are not formed in dependence upon God; and therefore in time of temptation we fall away. Or else, thirdly, we suffer our better impressions to be put out of our remembrance, by the world and its vanities, by the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life." Into some such condition as this we are either likely to fall, or are actually fallen, if the good seed bring not forth in us good fruit; if the Gospel of Christ work not in us "patience," "in well doing," Rom. 2. 7, together with "joy and peace in believing." Rom. 15. 13.

Nor let us be deceived into too favourable an opinion of ourselves, by any such signs of gospel grace as we may be able to discern in our hearts. For here we see that the seed, which fails at last, springs up often at first with promise of success. And besides those who are utterly destitute of all grace, and those who strive to be conformed to the image of their Saviour Christ, there are many who are halting "between two opinions," 1 Kings 18. 21, serving one while God and at another time, mammon; wavering between resolution to obey, and desire to transgress, not absolutely dead in trespasses and sins, and yet bringing forth no fruit to perfection. In this parable we learn the ordinary end of faith thus feeble, of love thus faint. The seed that lacked moisture withered away. That with which thorns at the same time sprang up, was choked by their company.

Let us note then the signs here given of good ground; let us study for our improvement the workings of an honest and good heart; to hear "the word," and "keep it," and "bring forth fruit with patience." Even to hear it, if we seek to hear it, is a grace. But further, we must keep it, that is, observe and obey it. And this is the same thing with bearing fruit, for it is the same thing with holiness of life. And lastly, we must bring forth this fruit with patience; that is with perseverance. We must not repine under the most severe affliction, we must not fail to seek continually for divine help, under the most tedious delay of the gifts we desire. However vexations we may find the conversation of the wicked, however weary may be the days of our pilgrimage, however anxious may be our desire to depart and to be with Christ; we must wait for God's good time, and continue in his good work, with zeal ever more vigorous, love ever more large, and hope ever more firm and steadfast.

Christ teacheth by parables; rebuketh the wind.

16 'No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17 'For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: 'for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

19 'Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered and said unto them, My

mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

22 'Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples; and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

23 But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

¹ Matt. 5. 15.

² Matt. 10. 26.

³ Matt. 13. 12.

|| Or, *thinketh that he hath.*

⁴ Matt. 12. 46.

⁵ Matt. 8. 23.

§ 206. *The spiritual consideration of natural objects.*

In the Gospel we find objects of most familiar occurrence made helpful to our understanding things spiritual. From the lighting of a candle and the setting it on a candlestick, our Lord could reason, and He would have us also reflect, on the certainty that in like manner all our doings shall be brought to light. Again, from the well known fact that the wealthy make the largest gains, whilst the poor, through lack of means, lose often what little means they have, He leads our minds to the corresponding rule of heavenly treasure, to our increase in grace and godliness, which may be greater, if we strive, or if not, will be less, in proportion to the measure we have already attained. Again, from the mention of his mother and his brethren, and their happening to desire to see Him, He takes occasion, to assure his disciples, for their comfort, in all ages of the world, that the nearest degrees of relationship to Himself are to "hear the word of God, and do it."

It will be our wisdom if from any such passages as these we learn to derive constant edification from every thing that takes place around us. Not a candle should be lighted, without our thinking of the light to which our own most secret works must surely be one day brought. Not a fortune should be made within our hearing of it, and we not think of laying up treasures in heaven, of studying in our heavenly course, like the children of this world in theirs, to lose nothing we once have gained, and to press forward to what we yet fall short of. Not a parent, or brother, or child, or friend, should delight our hearts with their affection, and we not turn often from these earthly ties, to think rather of our Father which is in heaven, of our Friend, who for us has laid down his life, and who now lives to make intercession for us. And so might we also in other things often reflect, from what we see, to what we believe on the testimony of God. Do we watch with interest the growth of the seed we have sown? Let it remind us of God's grace sown in our hearts. Do we enjoy the warmth of the midday sun, or admire the stars which give light unto the night? Let us call to mind the approaching of a time, when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12. 3.

Or are they the wonders of the deep which engage our attention? Is it the great sea, what we have heard of it, or beheld, that strikes us as most marvellous and strange? Here too, if we have God's word in our memories, if we have the love of Christ in our hearts, we shall turn from the reflection on the winds and waves, to the thought of Him who created them, and who can in a moment make them calm. "What manner of man is this?" the disciples justly ask; for what mere man will the storm obey? "Where is your faith?" our Lord had first no less justly inquired; for how, if they believed, could they have so greatly feared? Let us then in those storms which happen within ourselves, put our trust, without alarm, in our blessed Lord. When most we need, and ask his aid, He may seem, it is true, often to be as it were asleep. We ask, and for a time receive not. We seek, and find not. We knock, and it is not opened unto us. But is this because He cannot, will not, help? Nay; it is that we may learn to pray more fervently, and at the same time to wait more patiently; till Christ see fit to speak peace unto our souls. Oh, how great will be, not our fear and wonder, but our thankfulness and joy, when we attain to the full possession of that peace, which this world cannot give! There is neither pride, nor anger; no vexation, fretfulness, or discontent; no anxious thought beforehand, no disappointment afterwards; no sorrow; no strife; no pain.

God give us that calm within, which abides through all storms without! God give us that faith, which leaves no doubt; that love, which knows no fear! that love by which faith works! See Gal. 5. 6, that faith, which is made perfect by love! See James 2. 22.

Christ casteth out Legion.

26 ¹ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and

entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.

Ill must that man fare in his spiritual course, who forgets that he has to struggle against *Legions* such as here we read of. Many times, when he least expects, he will find himself led astray into the neglect of God's commands, or violently running down some steep descent of pleasurable sin. And yet few of us probably think as often as we ought, and none of us as seriously, as watchfully, of the evil influence of these wicked spirits, and of the true method of resisting their attempts. Let us look then to God's word for right notions of a matter, in which we can have no other means of information. There we learn that there is an evil angel, called Satan, and others his companions or servants, who have lost their first estate, see Jude 6, and who have access, in some manner we know not, to our hearts; stirring up all our worst thoughts, and prevent, to the uttermost in their power, all that in any sense, or by any means, are good. We see them not; and yet they are near to hurt. We hear them not; and yet they make us to understand whatever wickedness they desire to suggest. We touch them not; nor can they touch us; and yet we can be made as sensible, as though they could, that something unclean has come nigh to us; that foul thoughts of sin, hard thoughts of God, proud thoughts of ourselves, or unkind thoughts of our brethren, have been put into our hearts; we know not how, or when, or where; only we know certainly that they are "of the devil." John 3. 8.

When such is our condition, rather than say to Christ, "Torment me not," let us say, Lord, torment me. If by any manner of affliction it shall please God to visit us, and to bring us to our right minds; let us therein heartily rejoice. Let us desire and pray, to whatever suffering we may be put, that the evil spirits may be cast out. They no doubt all the while beseech Him that He will not command them to go out into the deep; that is, out of us, into the abyss of hell. And like to theirs would be our requests, if we still long to be indulged in sin, still grudge to suffer any thing, which makes us likely to be more free from their controul. Like to theirs was the supplication also of the Gadarenes, who besought Christ, in their great fear, that He would "depart from them."

How different was the temper of the people to whom He thereupon returned! How different to wait for Christ, and to receive Him gladly, from beseeching Him, by any coldness of speech or thought, by any preference of sinful pleasure to repentant tears, beseeching Christ to depart from us! To say, how I should like to transgress, if I safely might! Which of the two is this? To think that we may "continue in sin, that grace may abound;" Rom. 6. 1; which is this? To obey in fear; to give grudgingly; to go as near to falsehood, covetousness, or intemperance, as we dare; which are these? God forbid that we should choose the evil! God forbid that we should hesitate one moment to choose the good! God give us grace to choose aright, and to abide by our choice with joy for ever!

Christ healeth one woman, another he raiseth from the dead.

41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause

she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the Master.

50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

¹ Matt. 9. 18.

§ 208. *That lively faith is helpful to right knowledge.*

In these two miracles, we may observe the influence of faith on two different characters. Jairus "fell down at Jesus' feet:" The woman, that had an issue, "came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment." This in her was humility. Yet in the ruler there was no lack of humility; only in him faith wrought her the eagerness of prayer. Would we but put the best construction on what we see in the conduct of our brethren, we should, more often than we usually do, think well of them in what we see not. We should more often count for zeal, what we might else reckon hastiness or presumption; and for humility, what we might else take for ignorance, for meanness, or for consciousness of wrong.

This woman, besides her reluctance to make her condition public, seems to have thought that she might obtain her cure, without even Christ Himself knowing of it. She was healed notwithstanding this mistake. Hence we learn that faith, though conceived in error, if it be conceived heartily, if it work fruitfully, is nevertheless effectual to the saving of the faithful. It is our duty to acquire knowledge if we can. But if we have been shut out from it, we are not therefore shut out from God's mercy, for we are not therefore shut out from faith in Christ. How many, alas! throng and press Him, for one who thus touches Him in sincerity of belief! How many know the word of his Gospel, frequent the assembly of his servants, nay, even promote by their gifts and influence the spreading abroad of Christianity in the world; for one, who has such faith as makes him whole; who out of the abundance of iniquity, from which he has been delivered, is able to "go in peace!"

No mistake can be more dangerous, than to think that knowledge is the sure road to faith. Rather, we must first believe, ere we can truly know. So did both this woman, and Jairus. For Jairus, though he supposed that Christ could heal the sick, knew not that He could also raise from the dead. And what does our Lord require, ere He would make manifest by this act his divine power? "Fear not, believe only." Would we then know Christ as He is? Would we know all his power and wisdom, all his love for us, and pains that we might be saved? Let us not fear, but only believe. Let us not fear but that He both can and will be gracious. Let us believe all that He has said in his word: both believe what we can now know, and be desirous to believe what we may henceforth learn. Then, if it be for the best, He will add to our faith knowledge. Or if in this life such knowledge be too wonderful for us, we shall be sure to enjoy it in the next.

This is to be the great object of our hope, the life to come. And this one chief thing we must believe of our Lord, that He is able to raise us from the dead. This it is that fools make mock of; and the worldly wise also treat it often with contempt. Like the mourners in the history of this miracle, they laugh to scorn all those who act upon the notion that the dead are not dead, but only sleep. How well is their future confusion of face thus described in one of the books of the Apocrypha! "They, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" (Wisdom of Solomon 5. 3, 4, 5.)

Christ sendeth out his twelve disciples.

1 Then ¹ he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your

feet for a testimony against them.

6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

7 ² Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead;

8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

¹ Matt. 10. 1.

² Matt. 14. 1.

§ 209. *The perplexity of the sinful hearer.*

The twelve were sent forth to preach the kingdom of God, and empowered to confirm their preaching by the working of signs, and wonders. They were to set out on the assurance of providential support; such as in the ordinary course of God's dealings, no man has any reason to expect. In our journey through life, we may not venture to take neither scrip nor bread nor money. We may not neglect provision of those means which are necessary for our subsistence. Rather it is the rule of our Christian behaviour that we should be "not slothful in business." Rom. 12. 11. Rather it is the rule of our support under the Gospel, "that if any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thess. 3. 10. But whilst we provide for our wants, by industry in our several callings, we should learn from the directions here laid down, to limit them, by humility, temperance, and soberness. We should learn to reckon, whilst we work industriously for ourselves, that it is only by God's blessing that our work can prosper; that in the natural harvest, as well as in the spiritual, it is "God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. 3. 7.

The apostles were to "take nothing" for their journey. Thus, though it would ill become us in our journeyings to make no provision for the way, on the presumption of being miraculously supplied; it would be well, as we travel, often to call to mind how it is God's wisdom and his bounty that furnish us, abroad, as well as at home, whatever distance we have to go, whatever land to visit, with food convenient for us. The apostles were to abide, at each place they visited, in the first house they entered into. And this probably was in order to their being found more readily by those who came either to learn or gainsay. Hence we also may be instructed, whatever be our employment, to avoid all needless change of situation; not to dwell on the disadvantages of where we are, and thanklessly overlook our present comforts; but to abide in the station to which it has pleased God to call us, patient in the discharge of whatever duties He has assigned. In the apostles, who could heal as well as preach, to shake off the dust from their feet was a fit testimony and rebuke against unbelievers. For us, if our Christian counsel is ill received, it is enough to bear faithful witness to the truth, and earnestly to warn the gainsayers of their peril in neglecting the salvation of their souls.

This preaching of the apostles seems to have been one of the chief means by which the fame of Jesus reached Herod. Upon hearing of his mighty works, and the different reports of his being John or Elias, or some other of the old prophets, he is both perplexed, and also desirous to see Him. This is a common case with those who hear the Gospel faithfully preached; on the one hand an unprofitable curiosity, on the other a painful perplexity. They desire to see, they desire to hear, they desire to know; but they do not desire to believe or to obey. They desire, as did Herod; who sent not for Jesus, as far as we know, or ever saw Him at all, till the time when he had Him stand before his judgment seat, there mocked and set at nought by himself and his men of war. See Luke 23. 11. And when they hear and understand, how great is their perplexity! "John have I beheaded," may not be in any sense the accusation of their conscience. But have they not often cause to own within themselves, Christ have I crucified? This Jesus, whom I hear

moving me to do right! And can He be indeed the Lord of life and death? And may I not still safely sin? or must I rather expect to be in torments for ever, as one who sins against light and knowledge? Is He Christ, or is He not? Is He, or is He not to be, the Judge of all mankind? "Who is this?"

Never may we so hear with perplexity! Never so desire without purpose to obey! Never may we so hesitate in doing the will of Christ; never doubt in believing his truth!

Christ feedeth five thousand men.

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. ¹ And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

11 And the people when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

12 ² And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat.

¹ Matt. 14. 13.

And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17 And they did eat, and were all filled; and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

² Matt. 14. 15.

§ 210. *That we may do more good than we think for.*

The apostles told unto Christ all that they had done. This may be a pattern for us, in our practice of self examination. Not unto ourselves, but unto Him, who is ever present, we should daily lay bare our inmost thoughts; and learn, as from Him teaching us, and from his blessed word, both how to repent of our worst doings, and how to amend our best. Upon receiving their account of what they had been doing, "he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place." This, we must suppose, was in order to instruct them further in the great work they were engaged in, as his apostles. Let us learn hence, how expedient is privacy for preparation to any great undertaking; especially for the greatest of all works a holy life. Let us avoid therefore an incessant round of society. Let us seek frequent occasions to be by ourselves, with God only. And the more busily our hours are engaged, let us the more eagerly seize such opportunities of retirement, let us the more carefully watch to do nothing whilst in public, which we should be ashamed to own in private to our Lord.

And yet profitable as solitude may be, and pleasant as we shall find it thus to commune with our own hearts, and in our chamber, and be still, see Psalm 4. 4. we must not forget the example of our Lord, who, when the people followed Him, "received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God; and healed them that had need of healing." Ill prospers our devotion in retirement, if we cannot cheerfully put up with interruption, if we cannot be willing to do good to others, when we had designed to be improving ourselves. Such applications we must neither rudely refuse, nor hastily dismiss. For though the twelve came to our Lord, and said, "Send them away," He replied, with a view to our instruction, no less than to the feeding of the multitude, "Give ye them to eat."

And this should teach us to suspect our own selves, when we think of any plausible excuse, for dismissing a request to which we cannot conveniently attend. We are perhaps tempted to say that we are otherwise particularly engaged. Or we reflect that it concerns others, more closely than ourselves, to do the good that is required. But on such an occasion may God bring to our minds these words of Christ, "Give ye them to eat." This injunction may God give us grace to fulfil, by a readiness to assist each other, in the things which we conceive to be beside our province, or beyond our strength! We know not, till we try, how much we might do for the benefit of others. Nor can we imagine, till we have done it, how delightful it is to have done good, though it might not be most properly our place to do it.

One kind of good there is to do, for which we never can plead incapacity. And this is to spread abroad, by our words and works, the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. One kind of food there is, which the most helpless may minister abundantly. This is to make our light shine before men, that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven. For who is there that has no intercourse with his brethren? And how can we converse, or deal with each other, without manifesting either an indifference to Christ's religion, or else shewing, out of a good conversation, our works, with meekness of wisdom? See James 3. 13. And how can we do this, how can we manifest our love of God, without commending it to the regard of the beholders? And what enterprise for good need we fear to undertake, if we may trust, that we are thus enabled, during the years of our pilgrimage, to feed with the bread of Christian edification hundreds and thousands of our fellow creatures? Here truly the fragments are more than the loaves. The influence of each Christian act extends beyond bounds that man can calculate. It may turn, in the beholder, the fluctuating scale, between scorn and reverence, between doubtfulness and faith. And the soul, which it is made the instrument of converting, may be one, which, besides being saved itself, is designed in the economy of grace to help forward the salvation of the world.

Christ preacheth the cross, his own and ours.

18 ¹ And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

22 Saying, ² The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

23 ³ And he said to them all, If any man will come

after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 ⁴ For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

26 ⁵ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

27 ⁶ But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

¹ Matt. 16. 13.

² Matt. 17. 22.

³ Matt. 10. 38.

⁴ Matt. 16. 26. Mark 8. 36.

⁵ Matt. 10. 33.

⁶ Matt. 16. 28.

§ 211. *How we must not be ashamed of the cross of Christ.*

Whilst the people took Jesus for John the Baptist, for Elias, or for one of the elder prophets: the apostles, by the mouth of St. Peter, expressed the great truth of the Gospel, that He was "the Christ of God." They then who are most near to Him, they who are most closely acquainted with his words and works, these should most deeply feel, most openly profess, this certain truth. Hence we learn how much we have to answer for, enjoying as we do the full knowledge of the Gospel; how closely we are bound to own Him for the Christ, by loving Him, and serving Him, as the Saviour of our souls.

But in thus doing we meet with two chief difficulties; the one in doctrine, the other in practice. In doctrine, our stumbling-block is the cross of Christ crucified; our difficulty is the reluctance of human pride to owe all to his ignominious death. In practice, our difficulty is the cross which we must ourselves take up, it is the aversion of our will to deny ourselves, and to lose, if it be required, for his sake, our very lives. Of both these hindrances we have here full notice from our Lord. No sooner is He acknowledged by the apostles for the Christ, than He warns them how "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be slain." And that He straitly charged them to tell no man that He was the Christ, this shews that He was aware how the cross He had to suffer would prove a scandal, both to others, and to themselves. Ill would they have done to proclaim Him for the Christ, when they were likely afterwards, in his sufferings, to forsake Him, and fly. Ill too does it become us to make profession of Christianity, unless we receive into our hearts this humiliating truth, unless we can be faithful to Christ, when on the cross, as well as to Christ entered into his glory. It pleased God to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering. See Heb. 2. 10. Enough this must be to satisfy all doubts. Enough this must be to humble all pride. Enough this must be to make us place all our trust in Christ crucified.

But, secondly, "he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." This, observe, "he said to them all." This, we must all acknowledge, this is our great difficulty in the practice of religion. This is a difficulty that besets us every hour of our lives. For, observe further, we must take up our cross "daily." It is not in great matters only, it is not only on extraordinary occasions, that our Christianity is put to the test. It is to do ordinary things, even all things that we do, or say, or think; it is to think, to say, to do them, in a Christian spirit. This is needful, in order for us to be counted true followers of Christ. And what this Christian spirit is, we here evidently see. It is the spirit of humility. It is the spirit of selfdenial. It is a spirit whereby we patiently submit to affronts, and wrongs, and even to the loss of life. This spirit we must have always. Not only daily, or hourly must we be ready to do right at all costs; but always. For this is the only proof that the heart is changed. Not when we do a few things, on a few occasions, as Christ would have us; but when it is our heart's delight always so to act. We lose indeed hereby the world. We lose, many times, its profits, its pleasures, its approbation. But either we must lose these, or lose ourselves, and be cast away. If we are ashamed of the cross of Christ, if we are not resolved to take it up ourselves, our sentence is here fearfully set forth: "of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

Teach us, Lord, to follow Thee, through evil report and good! At all risk of scorn, at all cost of suffering, through all hindrances to faith, through all difficulties in practice, teach us to follow Thee!

Christ is transfigured. The apostles sleep.

28 ¹ And it came to pass about an eight days after these || sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

¹ Matt. 17. 1.

33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

|| Or, things.

§ 212. *How glorious are our hopes; and how feebly we entertain them.*

It was whilst our Lord prayed that his transfiguration took place; "the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." Prayer, with us also, will change both the face without, and the heart within; making the countenance to express that cheerfulness and love, which it enables the soul to feel. Nor will even our raiment remain uninfluenced by the practice of devotion. Instead of a chief instrument of vanity, we shall learn to esteem dress no more than a needful covering, on which we cannot easily spend too little pains for show, or too much for cleanliness, neatness, and propriety. But the change, which here ensued upon the prayer of our Lord, was of a kind rather like to what we hope to attain, at our departure from this present life. And the sight of it, which the apostles enjoyed with their outward senses, is well suited for the encouragement of our faith; that we may, without seeing, have a lively conviction of the glories of the world which is to come. And thus we may apply what is here set down of our Lord's transfiguration. First "the fashion of his countenance was altered." This is like to what St. Paul says of the resurrection of the body: "it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." 1 Cor. 15. 44. The form of the glorified saints, like the form of our Lord in his transfiguration, will be altered. How we know not. Only this we know, that it will not be what now it is; that it will be something far better. In the second place, "his raiment was white and glistening." Of raiment like to this we read in the Revelation of St. John, and we are there told that "fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Rev. 19. 8. In heaven, it seems thus to be signified, that we shall be both benefited ourselves, and distinguished amongst each other, by that righteousness which here we may attain, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thirdly, "there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory." This may lead us to expect, that hereafter it will be our privilege to converse with the great and the good of all generations. Fourthly, they "spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." This may serve to shew us what will be one chief topic of our conversation in the future state; even the love of God, in the redemption of mankind, by the blood of Christ; what one chief employment, even to join with thousands and tens of thousands, in the song that never endeth, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Rev. 5. 13.

"But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep." Here we may see represented our own too common condition, whilst all this great glory is so near at hand to us. We are, as it were, "heavy with sleep." Our minds, whilst we are awake, are as insensible to things divine, as they are to things earthly, whilst we sleep. The faint wishes we conceive of reaching unto the glory of the saints in heaven, how little are they better than unprofitable dreams! How seldom do they produce in us any corresponding conduct! How far do we fall short, in diligence and pains, of the great objects we profess to be aiming at! The apostles, when awakened, perceived the glory of the Lord, and would then fain have continued where they were. When we are roused from our condition of indifference, we long to be with Christ where He is. But a cloud must for a time overshadow us. The troubles of life must be first endured. The valley of the shadow of death must be first encountered; and that, in most cases, with fear and trembling. Blessed be God, that in the midst of the surrounding cloud, his voice has been heard to say: "This is my beloved Son!" And blessed be his name, that we through his Son are called to be sons also; accepted in the beloved, through his precious blood! Blessed be God, that we have been chosen to the privilege of hearing his Gospel; and to the grace, whereby if we fail not of ourselves, we may hear to the saving of our souls! And blessed be his name that it is no longer our duty to keep these things close, but rather to tell every man in these days the things which we believe; and to help them, if it may be, to believe likewise!

Christ healeth one that was frantic; foresheweth his sufferings.

37 ¹ And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

¹ Matt. 17. 14.

² Matt. 17. 22.

³ Matt. 18. 1. Mark 9. 34.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

44 ² Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

46 ³ Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,

48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

§ 213. *The necessity of watchfulness against spiritual pride.*

These things happened the very day after the transfiguration of our Lord. "When they were come down from the hill, much people met him." And a child, having been brought to Him, possessed with a devil, which the disciples were unable to cast out, "Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father." Hence we may learn one great advantage of meditation on the glories of heaven, and on the rest which is there promised to the saints of God. We are never better prepared, than when we come down from that mount, from that height of spiritual devotion, never better prepared for a successful conflict with the enemy who perpetually besets our souls. We are never better supplied with strength to cast out of us the spirit, which both bruise us and hardly departeth, than when we have been reflecting on the heavenly crown, which awaits our victory. If then there be in our hearts any spirit that "taketh" us captive in sin, that "tear" us by distraction of our thoughts from holiness; one from whose assaults we have sorely suffered, and whose dominion we have been hitherto unable to escape; if this have been our ease, and we do now earnestly wish to be healed, let us engage ourselves in the thought of Christ's glory, in the desire to partake of his inheritance. Then shall we best obtain grace to prevail over Satan, when most we have real pleasure in the contemplation of God, when most we dwell with longing hearts on those good things, which He has prepared for them that love Him.

A second thing, to be observed in this passage, is that Christ takes the very time of his exaltation, when He had been transfigured, and had wrought this signal miracle, and had raised the amazement of the beholders; this very time He takes, for reminding his disciples of the humiliation He had yet to endure. Let us learn hence, in our highest flights of devout meditation, and of spiritual hope, to be all the while humble minded. If by resisting the devil, we have made him flee from us, see James 4. 7, let us exult in no unseasonable triumph; but let us remember that we have yet more to conquer, yet more to endure. Presumptuous confidence is a state so full of danger, that it may be probable that our adversary has yielded, on purpose to draw us into it. Pride and boasting are sins so great, that he would gladly give us an advantage which might tempt us to commit them. Whatever therefore be our conflict, whatever our success, let us in the moment of victory call to mind, that we have so much the more need of constant watchfulness. This life is for warfare; the next for triumph. Here we must bear the shame of the cross; hereafter share the glory. Our adversary having ever some new plot for our destruction, we must never consider ourselves safe, until like our Lord we shall have been delivered up to death. May He, who for our sakes underwent that last and most fearful struggle, enable us to pass through it unhurt; both preserving us in safety, until the close of life, and suffering us not in our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Him! (See Burial Service.)

And especially, if we have grace to draw near to Him in faith and love, may He preserve us from spiritual pride, from such a fall as is here recorded of the apostles, who disputed which of them should be the greatest! Rather let us make much of others in comparison with ourselves. Let us receive, in Christ's name, with kind respect, those who seem to be the least in his kingdom. Let us esteem ourselves amongst the least, that so we may be in his sight great. And chiefly in respect of spiritual proficiency let us cherish this just estimate of our proper place. In respect to faith in Christ, and love of God, and practice of Christian holiness, in these let us be aware of our own backwardness. And knowing more of it in ourselves, compared with our opportunities, than we can possibly know in our neighbours, let us in these things, with true lowliness of heart, esteem others better than ourselves. See Phil. 2. 3.

Christ journeyeth towards Jerusalem.

49 ¹ And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as ² Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

57 ³ And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 ⁴ And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

¹ Mark 9. 38.

² 2 Kings 1. 10.

³ Matt. 8. 19.

⁴ Matt. 8. 21.

§ 214. *The nature of our journey heavenward.*

The disciples, whilst under rebuke for disputing among themselves, confess that they had been jealous of one, who cast out devils in the name of Christ, and yet followed not with them. Our Lord replies, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." This precept should temper with Christian love the thoughts which we are too apt to entertain against those, who differ from us in religion. Amongst the variety of sects which under different systems seek to cast out devils in the name of Christ, we must watch that we are jealous of none, that we envy none. In some things they may be, many of them, against us. But in many respects let us be assured that they are for us. They are for us in all that we and they are agreed upon. They are for us in the preference of heaven to earth. They are for us in urging the necessity of caring for the soul. They are for us in the preaching of faith and hope and charity.

Thus in many things we are agreed. Where we differ, let us examine with the more care whether we ourselves are right. Let us watch with the more caution lest we fall into wrong. Let us contend for the mastery, not with wrath but kindness, with a holy emulation in Christian proficiency. Let us call for no fire from heaven on their heads; unless it be that the warmth of Christian love, coming down from the Father of lights, may melt as into one body the discordant elements of Christ's community. Otherwise we shall be liable to be told by our Lord, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Otherwise we are neglectful of the lesson which we might hence derive, that even affronts on Himself or his religion, much more objections against that form of it which is ours, are to be answered, not by the heat of persecution, but by the fervour of charity; not by the temper which would destroy men's lives, but by the love that saves them.

In the refusal of the Samaritans to receive our Lord, we see fulfilled what He here says of Himself, "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And this remark ought to produce in us the conviction, that here we have no abiding place; ought to prepare us, if we mean to follow Christ, for a pilgrimage in which there is no place for rest. As our Lord went from village to village, so must we travel on from grace to grace. Would we stop at faith? Behold to this we must add virtue. At virtue? Nay, to this we must add knowledge; "and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." 2 Pet. 1. 7. Nor, in our journey to the spiritual Jerusalem, may we plead any special business, here first to be despatched, in delay of our advancement towards heaven. First I must acquire a competence, say some, and then I will be contented. First I must recover health, then I will be thankful. First lawfully indulge my desires, and then cease to cherish them unlawfully. But no, we must never thus put off our urgent call to be pure, to be patient, to be heavenly-minded. Our Christian duty must be no secondary concern. If we have friends whom it requires us to renounce, we must not so much as stay to bid them farewell; lest whilst we linger we are lost. When once we have put our hands to the heavenly plough, we must give no heed to our worldly pleasure. Not so much as a look may we cast back at the vanities of the life we have left, if we would be fit for the eternity to which we now are bound.

Grant, Lord, that none may be against us! Or if any, grant that we may not be against them. Shed abroad in our hearts those heavenly rays which serve to warm, but help not to consume! Make us to be all one in faith! Or if not, make us to be one in love!

Christ sendeth out the seventy disciples.

1 After ¹these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2 Therefore said he unto them, ²The harvest truly is great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: ³behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way.

5 ⁴And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house.

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto

¹ Matt. 10. 1.

² Matt. 9. 37.

³ Matt. 10. 16.

them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

13 ⁵Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

16 ⁶He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

⁴ Matt. 10. 11.

⁵ Matt. 11. 21.

⁶ Matt. 10. 40.

§ 215. *The privilege of enjoying a Christian ministry.*

As the apostles were the same in number with the tribes of Israel, so these seventy disciples corresponded with the seventy elders, of whom we read in the book of Exodus, 24. 1, 9. "They were appointed by our Lord to go, "before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come." In this respect their office was like that of ministers in our own times, whose duty it is to prepare the inhabitants of the earth for the coming of the Son of God. And their being sent forth "two and two," may probably remind us of the union which should always be carefully maintained, amongst all who are engaged, either as ministers or members of the church, in forwarding the work of Christ. With a harvest so great in view, with such abundance of iniquity in the world, with such a prevalence of evil over good, of ignorance over the knowledge of saving truth, how is it that they who wish to do God service are often employed in quarrelling with each other? Oh, when will they go forth, ever "two and two," agreeing with each other in the work they have in hand? When will they be fit, for their gentleness and kindness to each other, in the presence of a world that hates them, to be compared to lambs among wolves?

The instructions of these seventy are nearly the same as those given to the apostles; conveying the same general advice to trust for their support to God's special providence, to consider themselves as labourers in God's spiritual harvest; and, both by healing and by faithful warning, to promote amongst mankind God's kingdom. To the clergy these directions afford an useful lesson of the duties of their calling; constraining them to retire from all worldly care, and to forward, by their prayers and by their labours, the harvest of their Lord. And to the people committed to their charge, it is here very forcibly expressed, that the ministers of Christ must be respected for the sake of Him whose Gospel they preach: "He that heareth you heareth me; he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." This sentence is true of all whom Christ hath sent to preach the Gospel. And it should teach the rest, however great may be the faults of their ministers, to give heed always to what they teach in virtue of their office, and in harmony with the word of Him that sent them.

To live under a ministry, thus divinely appointed, is a privilege which lays a heavy responsibility on those who enjoy it. They see not indeed the mighty works of Christ, but they have heard, or they may hear, those whom He has appointed to commemorate them to the end of time. They have enjoyed, or it is their own fault, if they enjoy not, to their profit, a ministry, which He has ordained to endure even to the end of the world. Their opportunities may have been more or less favourable, their minister more or less accessible, more or less able, willing, or successful. But in any case let them remember that they have this to answer for, if they respected not, in his ministration, Him that sent him; if they profited not thereby to the utmost of their power. In a Christian land, in a country where there is a Christian church, who is there so out of the reach of Christian instruction, that he can stand on the same ground with them of Tyre and Sidon? Who is there but must tremble then to think that they would have repented, if he has not; and that, wicked as they were, and devoted to destruction, yet for them it may be more tolerable in the day of judgment than for him!

Christ rejoiceth, and teacheth to rejoice.

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that

thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

22 || All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*.

23 And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, ¹ Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

|| Many ancient copies add these words, *And turning to his disciples, he said.*

¹ Matt. 13. 16.

§ 216. *The subject of Christian rejoicing.*

When we read of the seventy returning again with joy, and reporting their success to Jesus, we ought to consider how great is our own privilege, that we are permitted in our doings to commune with our Saviour, and to reckon that in what we do, we are forwarding his work. To us has He given grace to tread "over all the power of the enemy," to us the promise is assured that with his grace nothing "shall by any means hurt us." Let us take heed, from what He said to the disciples, not to rejoice merely as conquering the evil spirits, but as having our names written in heaven. To exult, to triumph, to glory over another, is so far from a Christian frame of mind, in our present state of trial and of danger, that not even over devils should we thus boast on earth. But for our hope of heaven, for the assurance that unto them that overcome there is prepared a crown of glory, for this we may rejoice, for this we must rejoice, if we would fulfil the commandments of our Lord.

In this joy He has Himself led the way; thanking God, as He does here, for the revelation of his mercy, and for its being imparted, without respect to persons, not to those who are wise in their own eyes, but to those who are as babes, lowly in mind. We see then in what case we may rejoice with safety; when we are in an humble, teachable frame of mind. For then will God reveal to us, in his Son, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. We see too here what are the things to be revealed, the things to be rejoiced in. They are what many prophets and kings desired to see, and saw not. They are what the eyes of the disciples did see, and their ears did hear. They are Christ, and He crucified; a Saviour from sin, a Teacher of holiness, a mediator between God and his fallen creatures. They are the miracles He wrought, the words He spake, the Gospel He preached, the death He died. They are his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven: the one, that we too should be raised from the grave, the other, that where He is, there we might be also. In these things it is our Christian duty to rejoice. In these things if we rejoice not, we neither fulfil the precept Christ gave to his disciples, nor follow the example He gave us in Himself. A Christian without joy, either believes not what God has in Christ revealed, or hopes not to attain to a heavenly inheritance. Let us look to it, that our hope and faith be not hindered by some consciousness of unrepented sin, by some fearful apprehension that our hearts are not right with God, our affection not set on things above. Let us be aware that it is God only who can in these things set us straight, who can reveal to us the truth, and give us the grace to love it. And let us pray to Him, that of his mercy He will make us to know both the Father and the Son; that He will make us to know them to our joy; that He will enable us, according to the rule of the apostle to "rejoice in the Lord alway." Phil. 4. 4.

And especially let us lay seriously to heart the description here given of the persons, to whom the Almighty Father is wont to make these things known. Not to the "wise and prudent," but "unto babes," doth He reveal the things which belong unto salvation. Not unto them that are wise in their own conceit, but unto such as are lowly in their own esteem. If then we have not yet known these things to our joy, let us consider whether the fault be not in our own pride of heart. Let us endeavour more entirely to depend on the teaching of our heavenly Father. Let us remember that He, and He only, can reveal to us what more we need; that He, and He only, has imparted what now we know.

Thanks be to God, that He has made us to know the things that belong unto our peace! Thanks be to God that through his goodness we may know them daily more and more to our endless joy! Thanks be to God that He has given us the power to resist and to overcome the enemy of our souls! Thanks be to God that our names are written, if through his mercy they may be written, in heaven! Thanks, Lord, our lips with joy express! Thanks, Lord, let our lives with holiness declare!

The Samaritan neighbour.

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest

that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out || two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

¹ Matt. 22. 35.

|| See Matt. 20. 2.

§ 217. *Who is our neighbour?*

The lawyer, who asked the way to inherit eternal life, was referred by our Lord to "the Law." Christians, under the same doubt, must turn to the Law also; but must take it as it is enforced in the Gospel. "This do, and thou shalt live," is undoubtedly our promise, if we do as Christ has required us; if through faith in his merits, if in the strength of his grace, we love God with all our soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. And here we learn to what extent these duties reach. Here we see, that, as there is no end to the perfections we are to adore in God, so neither is there any limit to the charity we are to feel for man. Vain is all attempt to elude this duty, by raising the question, "Who is my neighbour?" The narrative of this Samaritan expressly teaches us, that not the ties of country or of kindred, not the community of religious profession, but the wants of our common nature, make every man, whom we can in any way assist, our neighbour.

That no other consideration can be depended upon, is well shewn in the conduct of the priest, and of the Levite. Of them it might have been naturally expected, that they would do more than merely look upon their wounded countryman, and pass by on the other side. In them we have a lively proof of the vanity of an outward calling without inward grace. In them we see a true representation of the uncharitable in every age, country, and profession; of all, who in the hardness of their hearts, neglect their fellow creatures in distress. Around them misery abounds. They lift not so much as a finger to remove it. Close to them, as they go along the path of life, there is pain and sickness, hunger and nakedness, ignorance and sin. To see it they cannot always avoid. To look on it they sometimes venture, as in idle curiosity. To relieve it is what they never in earnest attempt. They pass by on the other side, the side of worldly ease, the side of selfish indifference.

Not so must he do who would inherit eternal life. For his guidance he has the example of this Samaritan. For his encouragement he has the exhortation of Christ: "Go and do thou likewise." This pattern of a real neighbour was himself also on his journey. He had business of his own, as well as the priest and Levite. And yet he could find time for waiting on the wounded. He could pour in his own oil and wine, set him on his own beast, and part with his own pence, to provide for his support. Not only then the money which we can easily spare, but our time and attention, though it be to our own hindrance, the very provision we have prepared for ourselves, the very beast we mean to use for our own conveyance, these we ought to offer, with these we ought willingly to assist our neighbour in his need. And we ought, in such a case, to count for our neighbour, not only our acquaintances and friends, but even the enemies of our country, and strangers to ourselves. Thus might we best imitate that one only good Samaritan, who, when we were at enmity through sin, and stripped by Satan, and half dead, came unto us from the glory of the Father, bound up our aching wounds, brought us into the resting place of his covenant; and undertook for our support by his grace, until the time when He should come again to take us to Himself.

"Go and do thou likewise." "Go." Be no longer still, no longer idle, no longer content with pitying the distressed; set about relieving them in earnest. "Go." Leave thy home of comfort. Leave thy haunts of pleasure. Leave thy own idleness. Leave thy own business. "Go, and do thou likewise." Do as did the good Samaritan. Do as did thy Saviour Christ. Do whatsoever good thy hand can find. Relieve whatever misery thine eyes can see. Clothe them that are stripped of their raiment. Bind up the wounded in spirit. And though it be the most bitter of thine enemies that is in want, pour into his reluctant heart the oil and wine of Christian kindness. "Go, and do thou likewise."

Christ teacheth Martha and Mary.

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care

that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

§ 218. *The one thing needful.*

The history of Martha and Mary, whilst it forms a most striking lesson to the female Christian, is full of profitable instruction for us all. It warns us very forcibly against that, which is frequently our besetting sin. It tells us very seasonably of that, which must be always our most important duty. The sin, against which it warns us, is the having our minds too much occupied, our hearts too much distracted, by the trifling cares of this transitory life. The duty which it enforces is this, that we should choose rather the one thing needful; that we should sit, for this object, at Jesus' feet, and hear his word.

The temptation which beset Martha was contrived by Satan, to spring up, as is often the case, from what is the ordinary duty of her sex, the providing for the wants of a family. To minister to the hospitable entertainment of her guest, so it had been done in due measure and in a proper frame of mind, would have secured for her the praise, and not the censure, of our Lord. It was her being cumbered with thus ministering, it was her paying more attention to it than she should have done, it was her being so engrossed with her business, as to neglect this singular opportunity of religious instruction, and not only to neglect it herself, but to grudge her sister the enjoying it; this it was that called forth the merciful reproof, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Mary is not here praised for the neglect of household duties; but for putting them readily aside, on being visited by Christ; for choosing as her better part, to listen to his words. Enough might soon have been prepared to satisfy a guest so humble. And He purposely here signifies how much more highly He would feel honoured by a more devout attention, than by a larger feast. Let us watch then, whether we have to earn a livelihood, or to prepare a meal; whether we are engaged in providing the means of sustenance, or employed in helping to dispense it. Let us watch that we so minister to the wants of the body, as not to neglect the necessities of the soul; that whilst we make provision for this present life, we think mainly all the while of the life which is to come. This was Mary's choice. "Mary hath chosen that good part." It was not forced upon her. It was not even prescribed to her. She chose it. We have the power to choose. God has given us this ability. But being given, it is ours. That He gave it, this makes us obliged to Him for the gift. This should constrain us to use it as He would have us. That it is ours, this makes us answerable for how we use it. This makes each act we do, each word we utter, each thought we think, our own. We can choose whether we will think, speak, and do them. We can choose. For God has given us our choice. We can choose. Yet, without God's further help, we can never choose aright.

In our choosing let us remember that "one thing is needful;" and one only. One thing is needful, even life eternal. "And this is life eternal," as our Lord has Himself expressed it, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17. 3. To know so as to believe unto the saving of the soul, this is that first of duties, with which no other must be allowed to interfere. One thing is needful, the saving of the soul. And one thing for this is needful, faith in Christ. And for this also there is one thing needful, the grace of God. And for this there is on our parts, one thing needful, sincere and fervent prayer. "One thing is needful," and one only; because no other thing is of any value in comparison. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. 16. 26. What is any object we have on earth to gain, any entertainment we have here to provide, any joy we have here to hope for, any immunity from pain we have here to secure what are these, that for them a man should give his soul in exchange?

Grant, Lord, that we may never be so cumbered with the cares of this present life, as in any wise to neglect the salvation of our souls! Give us grace to have a true and saving faith! Give us grace to have a hearty desire to pray! And hear us, whilst with all our hearts we pray, Lord save our souls alive!

Christ teacheth to pray.

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us || day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine † in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

¹ Matt. 6. 9.

|| Or, *for the day.*

† Or, *out of his way.*

² Matt. 7. 7.

³ Matt. 7. 9.

§ 219. *Encouragement in praying.*

"Lord, teach us to pray." This is itself a very necessary prayer. Nor must we expect to pray with any good effect, till we are sensible, that in this, as in all other duties, we have need of the divine teaching. The request is answered by that form of supplication, which we commonly call the Lord's Prayer, and which has previously been recorded by St. Matthew 6. 9—13. Though delivered, on two different occasions, there is so little variety in the expressions, that we have herein full authority for using a set form of words to pray by. Whilst what little variety there is shews that we are not bound to one form only, but that we may use any words which express the same kind of wants, in the same humble dependence upon God. Never then let us be weary of praying, either in these words, or after this manner. Never let our devotion flag for want of new prayers, or more fervent prayers; whilst we have this to use, which Christ has taught, and others like to this provided by his church.

This prayer our Lord follows up by two arguments, of great force to encourage us in praying. The first is, that importunity succeeds, even in one who is not of the same family, even in one who is afar off from God. The second is, that we, being his sons, his children by adoption and grace, may so much the more be sure that we shall pray with good success. In the first case we have the master of the house described as having retired to his rest, his family having gone to bed as well as himself; so that there was no one who could be expected to claim admittance or food. Yet if a friend were to persist in calling him up, in pressing him to lend loaves for an urgent occasion, though he should owe no such favour on the score of friendship, yet, rather than be disturbed by his importunity, "he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth." If we agree that this would probably be the case, that thus "every one that asketh receiveth," we must acknowledge also the force of the application to our praying unto God: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

But what, now, if we be not merely friends, but sons, members of the same household, accustomed to receive our daily sustenance from the same parent, who also first gave us life? Of such an one should we expect, that if we were to ask a fish, he would give us a serpent? Of such an one could we doubt that he would give good gifts unto his children? If of this we have no doubt, even in the case of parents who are evil, in the case of an angry or careless father, such as is many a parent upon the earth; how much more shall we be sure of our heavenly Father, that He will "give the Holy Spirit," that best of all good gifts, "to them that ask Him?" Let us pray therefore with importunity, as being sensible that we have urgent need. Let us pray with confidence, as being assured that it is a Father whom we address. Let us pray, as sons who rely on Him for support, and who doubt not that we shall receive it at his hands. Let us pray for the honouring of his name, for the coming of his kingdom, for the fulfilment of his will. Let us pray for our own forgiveness and deliverance from sin, for grace to assist us when tempted, and yet rather to be saved from temptation. Let us pray for wisdom to direct our prayers aright, and for devout attention that we may offer them without offence to Him before whose throne we kneel.

"Lord, teach us to pray!" Lord Jesu Christ, Thou who art Master of our souls, Thou who hast bought us with a price, Thou who art the Giver of all good gifts; "teach us," for of Thee only can we learn; "teach us," for Thou only knowest how; teach us, for Thou art our only Mediator and Advocate; "Lord, teach us to pray!"

Christ casteth out a devil that was dumb.

14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

15 But some of them said, 'He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

16 And others tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils,

no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

¹ Matt. 9. 34. & 12. 24.

² Matt. 12. 43.

§ 220. *That we cannot become good on bad motives.*

We need frequently to be reminded that we have an active spiritual enemy. And such passages as this should at once make us sensible of our danger, and turn our thoughts to the right method of avoiding it. The control of evil spirits over the outward sense, as it took place in our Saviour's time, is a forcible proof that they really exist, and that they work for evil to the children of men. Here we learn who it is that alone can master them. Here we see how worse than idle is the thought, that any one of them can be resisted by the aid of any other of them.

This is what men attempt, when they seek to overcome the temptations of sin by mere worldly motives, which are but the suggestions of Satan; when they would cast out the devil of lust, or covetousness, or sloth, by the devil of pride, or false shame, or selfish interest. If it be true, as we know it is, that a kingdom divided against itself is sure to be brought to desolation, we may be certain that Satan is not divided against himself; that he helps not to cast himself out, and that only by the finger of God can he be subdued. It must be a stronger than he; and this is God. It cannot be himself, or his kindred evil spirits. For in this matter whoever is not with Christ is against Him. They work not with Him. They suggest not Christian motives. They whisper that we may do well to be honest, sober and industrious, out of regard, not to Christ, but to our own worldly comfort. But hereby they can never mean to promote in us, and hereby there never can be produced, that true industry and honesty and temperance, which are rooted in the heart. For this would be to hurt their own kingdom. Whereas the outward profession, or the outward action, if it proceed from an unconverted heart, helps only, to their greater triumph, to make us hypocrites in the sight of God. We are farther off from being true members of Christ and his kingdom, if we act on such worldly policy, than if we had no regard to it at all. If we adopt a decent moral exterior, out of respect only to our comfort and advancement here, we are so much the less likely to come to a due sense of our sinfulness in the sight of God, to a due dependence on the atonement of Christ, to a lively faith, to an effectual repentance, to an entire affection for our heavenly calling.

The unclean spirit may indeed have gone out. His house may, to all outward appearance, be "swept and garnished." Gross acts of transgression may have ceased. But the enemy is restless; the defence is weak. And if the abode which he has left be not filled in the mean time with "all the fulness of God," Ephes. 3. 19, the evil one will find no difficulty in returning; and "the last state of that man is worse than the first." It is worse, because it is harder for him to be again stirred up. It is worse, because he may very probably never live to have another opportunity of deliverance. It is worse, because the enemy will have got the stronger hold. It is worse, because He, who alone can help, will not always by his Spirit strive with man. It is worse, for Christ has said that so it is.

God teach us to trust in no one but Himself, to act on no motives but those which He reveals! God help us to cast out the unclean spirit; and when out, to bar against him his lost abode, that he never shall enter into it any more! God grant that we may never fall away from the grace we have once attained, may lose no advantage we once have got; but may have our last state daily better than the first!

Christ denounceth an evil generation.

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

¹ Matt. 12. 38.

² Matt. 5. 15.

|| See Matt. 5. 15.

³ Matt. 6. 2.

§ 221. *That we have sufficient signs.*

For a woman, who saw our Lord's works, and heard his discourses, it was natural to express her admiration, by pronouncing his mother blessed. This was no more than what the angel had said to Mary, "Blessed art thou among women." Luke 1. 28. Nor did Jesus by his remark pass censure on the expression. Only He would have us to know, for our comfort, that, lightly as his mother was favoured, there is a higher favour, a greater blessing, within the reach of every one of us. "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." This word it is our privilege to hear. Let it be our earnest endeavour to keep it. Let us feel that it is our own fault if we keep it not; if we find not in it the blessing which is here assured to us by Christ.

"And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign." It was evil to ask for a further sign, because this shewed that they were not convinced by the many miracles which they had already seen. It was dictating to our Lord on what terms they would believe. It is like what the rich man in the parable said of his brethren, "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Luke 16. 30. It is what many now think, though they do not openly say it: If I could see heaven and hell more plainly, if I could feel the Holy Spirit of God more sensibly, if I could understand more entirely the mystery of Christ crucified for my sins, then I would believe, then I would amend, then I would be not almost only, but altogether a Christian. But it is for God to propose the sign. It is for us in all humility to receive it. And the sign He gives us is the same which was given to the Jews, "the sign of the prophet Jonas." Three days was the prophet in the whale, and Christ the like season in the bowels of the earth. The death and resurrection of Christ, these are our signs; his death by reason of our sins, his rising again for our justification.

This is a sign which God has not put as in a secret place, but which He has so set forth and verified, as that it is visible to all. If we see it not, the fault must be not in the light, but in the eye; in the eye that should behold, but will not. It is because the light that is in us, our own reason, our own choice, our own will, it is because these are darkness, therefore it is that we see not, believe not. If then this be our case, and to whatever degree it is our case, let us be assured that in us it is sin. For against us will rise up in the judgment the queen of the south and the men of Nineveh, and all, in all ages of the world, who, with faculties the same as our own, have chosen better, and obeyed more. And let us consider how greatly our sin is aggravated by being committed in the full sunshine of the Gospel. A greater than Jonas, a greater than Solomon is here. Therefore shall the heathen of the ancient world, and the idolators of distant lands, "rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them." For they "repented at the preaching of Jonas." They "came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon."

See then, in their example, what is required of ourselves; to labour for knowledge, and to improve in grace: to spare no pains in our search for wisdom, and no sacrifice in our endeavours to amend; to take heed to the light that is in us, and to take heed that it be not darkness; to take pains to hear the word of God, and to take pains to keep it. We must not grudge to spend our time; or, if need be, to move our habitation. We must refuse to go, for earthly benefit, to parts where we should enjoy less spiritual advantage. We must be willing to come from far to a land where the pure Gospel may be heard. And above all, when we hear it, we must repent at the preaching of it; we must believe; we must obey.

Christ reproveth the Pharisees.

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38 And when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

39 ¹ And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

41 But rather give *alms* of such things as ye

have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 ² Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

44 Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over *them* are not aware of *them*.

¹ Matt. 23. 25.

Or, as you are able.

² Matt. 23. 6.

222. *That we must obey in the heart.*

Our Lord, who had sat at meat with publicans, now refuses not to dine with Pharisees, who, esteeming themselves righteous, were therein the greater sinners of the two. He prepares to instruct them, by first omitting some trifling ceremony of washing, to which they attached undue importance. Whereupon they had no sooner marvelled, than He pointed out to them the folly of attending so much to outward washing, whilst they neglected all inward purity. This is what his discourses continually aim at. This is what we ought to esteem the very substance of Christian obedience; namely that which is in the heart within. Fools we should be to forget that He who "made that which is without, made that which is within also." To offer unto Him no other than outward homage, whether it be in purity, or charity, or any other matter of duty, is to offer but a small part of that which is his right. Thus did the Pharisees in their washings, in their scrupulous tithing of trifles, in their affected greetings in the markets; they put on an exterior of kindness, justice, and cleanliness, whilst they neglected to cherish these graces in their hearts.

This we also are guilty of, whensoever we make a fair show to the eye of man, whilst our motives, wishes, or designs, are the very reverse of what appears in our conduct. To be just in our dealings, but covetous in our thoughts; just where injustice would disgrace us with the world, but ready to wrong our neighbour if the wrong may be concealed; to greet with needless courtesy those whose company we in reality dislike; to give with bountiful hand what all the while we grudge, and would gladly withhold; this is to be hypocrites as the Pharisees. This is to be subject to their woe. This is to be what our Saviour calls "graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." Above, the turf is clean, or the ground well ordered and set with flowers. Beneath, the human form is mouldering in decay. The life, as it appears, is sober, honest, kind. The soul within is sensual, false, and cold; it is dead; it is hastening to corruption. Let us remember that the day is at hand when these graves also shall be opened. The hour is coming when the secret iniquity of the hypocrite shall be exposed before the judgment seat of Christ. Let us not only act, but think and wish and feel, as we desire that we should be thought to do by others, as we would be glad to be seen to do by our Saviour Christ. He sees, even now, before the day of judgment. He sees each thought that we conceive, each wish we form, each feeling we entertain. He is aware of them. Let us be always aware that He is so.

Oh, how may we be made clean in his sight? How, but by having our souls washed in his most precious blood? No other cleansing can avail. No outward ceremony can suffice. The corruption is within. The "ravening and wickedness" is in the "inward parts." It is where we cannot see, or hear, or handle. It is where we think, and desire, and choose. It is where we long, and loathe. It is where we love, and hate. There it is that we are by nature foul. There, that by God's grace we must become clean. And only through the merits of the death of Christ can this be done. And only through faith in his blood can this blood be effectual to our salvation. We must believe, in order to be saved. We must believe, in order to be cleansed. We must believe, in order to hate the sin which before we loved; in order to love, what we by nature hate, the ways of holiness and truth. Then shall we be "clean every whit;" John 13. 10; clean if we believe, but not because we believe; clean, because Christ has cleansed us; clean, because washed in his blood. This is saving faith. Not to trust in our own believing; but to believe, and to trust, in Christ. This is saving faith. For in thus believing we are clean. We are clean; and all things are clean to us. When we believe, so as to give alms of such things as we have; when we believe, so as to love; when we believe so as to love all mankind, for this reason that Christ hath loved us; then all things are clean to us. There is nothing we can do wrong, when we do all in love. There is nothing we can do wrong, when we do all in faith. "To the pure all things are pure." Tit. 1. 15. To them that are cleansed by the blood of Christ all things are clean. All things, that they who love God can love to do, are holy, and just, and good.

Christ reproveth the lawyers.

45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

46 ¹ And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers ! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

47 ² Woe unto you ! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers : for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute :

¹ Matt. 23. 4.

² Matt. 23. 29.

³ Gen. 4. 8.

⁴ Matt. 23. 13.

|| Or, *forbad*.

50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation ;

51 ³ From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple : verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

52 ⁴ Woe unto you, lawyers ! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge : ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye || hindered.

53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things :

54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

§ 223. *That we must not condemn our neighbours.*

The lawyers here mentioned were the same as the scribes ; persons, whose profession it was to interpret the law of Moses. They were aware, it seems, that what our Lord said against hypocrisy in the Pharisees, must needs amount to a reproach against them also. It was well that they should be sensible of their guilt. And the divine Teacher, far from helping them, in false kindness, to excuse it, brings it home to them, by plainly telling them of their chief transgressions. The first is, that they had laden men with burdens grievous to be borne, and yet themselves would not so much as touch them with one of their fingers. This they did as interpreters of the Law. And thus we also offend, whensoever we expect, as we commonly do, in others, a degree of virtue, which, for some specious reason, we allow ourselves to fall short of.

There is no inconsistency in our nature more striking than this. There is none that more frequently requires our self examination. Is this so great a sin in my neighbour ? Let me search, and see, whether I offend in it myself. Is this duty so incumbent upon him ? How can it be not incumbent on me also ? How can I fail, in each burden I lay on him, to be heaping up a load upon my own conscience ? How dare I be idle, when I look for him to be diligent ; sensual, if I expect him to be sober ; proud, if of him I demand humility ; covetous, and require him to be free to give ?

The next charge is, that they had built the sepulchres of the prophets, whom their fathers killed. And the weight of the charge consisted in their being as willing all the time to commit the like murder. And so indeed they proved themselves to be, in their zeal for putting to death that Holy One, of whom the prophets spake, and by reason of whose death there was to be required of that generation the blood of all the prophets, which had been “ shed from the foundation of the world.” Never then let us venture to imply censure on others, where our own conduct is open to rebuke. Never let us commit those sins, which, being known either to man or God, disqualify us for important duties ; forbid us, for very shame, to reprove our brother in offence, or to help in redressing the wrongs of the injured, because we are conscious of having helped to create them. What a weight should this thought have with us, as against the force of temptation. If we fall, our falling will tie our hands from doing good, will restrain our tongues from godly utterance. Our own like transgressions, known to our neighbours, and staring us in the face, will render us unfit to admonish the living, or to defend from such injustice as we ourselves commit, the memory of the dead.

The third charge, against these expounders of the Law, is, that they had taken away the key of knowledge, and whilst they entered not in themselves, they hindered those that would. This offence consisted in their shutting up from the people the use of the inspired volume ; and in not using it for the improvement of their own lives. Not much unlike to theirs is the disposition of such as grudge in their neighbours any height of piety which they are themselves unable to reach. They require it indeed, as was before said, so as to find fault where it is not ; yet they would hinder it, if they could, because they hate it where it is. And the reason is, that it is a reflection on their own deficiency. It makes manifest their unbelief. It aggravates their condemnation. Hence flows the detraction of the wicked against the good. Hence the enmity and jealousy of the world towards the faithful disciples of Christ. Let us take heed that we in no case entertain these evil tempers. Rather let us be stirred up, by what of good we see in others, to a holy emulation of the like excellent gifts. Let us rejoice in their success with unfeigned joy ; blessing God's holy name for all his servants who live or die in his faith and fear : and beseeching Him to give us grace so to follow their good example, that with them we may be partakers of his heavenly kingdom.

Christ teacheth to avoid hypocrisy.

1 In 'the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 'For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3 'Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

4 'And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two || farthings,

and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

8 'Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 'And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

¹ Matt. 16. 6.

² Matt. 10. 26.

³ Matt. 10. 26.

|| See Matt. 10. 29.

⁴ Matt. 10. 32. 2 Tim. 2. 12.

⁵ Matt. 10. 19.

§ 224. *The connexion of fear and falsehood.*

Hypocrisy is the pretending to be what we are not. It is when we, by our words or actions, make people believe us better, or indeed in any way other than we are. Against this leaven of the Pharisees our Lord here first warns us, by the assurance, that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." Our lips, or lives, may for the present mislead the beholders, causing them to form too favourable an opinion of our characters. But it is only for the present. It is only for the short duration of our own life, or of the outward world. Soon cometh the end, when everything will be seen to be as it actually is; and not only as it is, but as it has been from the first. How forcibly should this reflection check in us all approach to deceitfulness in our words or conduct! If ever we are thus tempted to transgress, let us call to mind, ere we utter the language of flattery, ere we perform the act of pretended kindness, or of affected devotion, that our inmost thoughts, even what we at that very moment purpose in our hearts, will be hereafter made manifest to those whom we would now deceive.

Our Lord next shews the folly of that fear of man, from which hypocrisy very commonly proceeds. Nothing so often tempts us to conceal the truth, as a dread of offending our fellow creatures. Yet the utmost they can do is to kill the body. And their more ordinary revenges are ill usage, ill words, or some such return for the truth we tell them, as at the utmost, if only we rightly receive it, extends not beyond bodily harm. When therefore we consider the slight importance of the body, compared with the soul, we ought to banish from our minds the fear of man, and to fear Him only, "which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." He it is who notes those sparrows, which we so lightly value; He, who numbers the very hairs of our head. Therefore ought we never to fear, because of his boundless power, because of his universal providence, because of his assurance, here recorded, that we are of "more value than many sparrows." Therefore ought we never to be "afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;" Isa. 51. 12; never to be so afraid, as to forget the Lord our Maker, "that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth;" Isa. 51. 13; who has made both body and soul, and can destroy them both for ever.

And especially let us beware, lest, out of the fear of man, we, in any sense, in any degree, commit the great sin of openly denying what is true in Christ Jesus. For the disciples to whom our Lord spake these words, this caution was the more obviously needed, on account of their being persecuted for the profession of Christianity, brought "unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers;" and there tempted to renounce their faith in Christ. This if they had done, it would have implied that his miracles were false; it would have been to blaspheme that Holy Spirit by whom the miracles were wrought. Our use of this warning is to be found, when we are in the company of such as would discountenance the practice of any Christian duty. To smile at their profaneness, or to suspend our own devotion, to join against our conscience in their vain amusements, or to lay aside, out of compliance with their wishes, our own more Christian employments; this, let us remember, is to deny Christ before men. And for them that do so, the end let us remember, is this: they "shall be denied before the angels of God."

At such an hour, in such an emergency, do Thou teach us, Holy Spirit, what we ought to say! Help us to speak "the truth in love!" Eph. 4. 15. Help us to win our brother, whilst we confess our blessed Lord! Help us to fear no man, but to fear *only* God!

The foolish rich man.

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow

my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night || thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

|| Or, do they require thy soul.

§ 225. *How to be rich toward God.*

Greatly did that man err, who asked our Lord to interfere with his brother, in the matter of a disputed inheritance. His judgment, as we may collect from his reply, is not to be in the perishable riches of this world, but in the treasures of life eternal. These He will divide according to his word, unto all who through faith obey his will. In that will of his, as declared in the Gospel, there is no point more clear than this, that we must be indifferent to the acquisition of worldly wealth, as willing to yield, as to prosecute our claim, to the inheritance which a brother unjustly withholds. And for our improvement in this temper, Christ draws this lively picture of a worldly minded man. Here we have one who thought that a man's life does consist "in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." For no sooner had he received a great increase of his store, than he reckoned on a long continuance of life. He was perplexed as to how he might best secure for himself the enjoyment of all that he possessed. He determined to rebuild his barns, that he might have room to hoard up his goods and fruits. And then he thought he might say to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." In the midst of these reflections, God, we are told, said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Folly it is at any time to feel secure of living long. But how doubly foolish, if, as our Lord would teach us in the instance of this rich man, if when most we feel secure of life, the messenger of death is most near at hand! How much better at such a time, instead of building barns, instead of making provision for the flesh, how much better to be found spending freely, and giving liberally, as faithful stewards of God's good gifts!

"Then whose shall those things be?" His no longer. Here we read the vanity of all earthly treasure, of all possessions whether great or small, which are so eagerly sought after in the world. One hour we call them our own property; the next they are gone, or rather we are gone who owned them. We leave them when we least expect it, for the grave, and for the judgment seat of Christ. Such is the case with him "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Such is the sentence of all, whether rich or poor, who set their heart on the vanities of this present life, instead of laying up their treasures in heaven. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." In the hour when thou hast been used to calculate thy gains or to enjoy thy pleasures, at the time when the companions of thy folly are engaged in like mirth or covetousness, then shall the soul which thou hast neglected be summoned, ill prepared as it is, to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

But not so is the end of the devout Christian; not such his summons to the presence of his Lord. Death comes not to him unlooked for, finds not him making provision for the flesh. Nor does his sentence proclaim him for a fool, but for a good and faithful servant. If he have ground, and it bring forth plentifully, so much the more large is his bounty, so much the more lively is his thankfulness, so much the more earnest is his preparation, that he may give an account of his stewardship. If he be poor, he is contented with his station; not craving for more goods and fruits on earth, but watching with hope and joy, that he may attain to an heavenly inheritance. In either state of life it is his endeavour, not to lay up "treasure for himself," not to secure all that he can for his own enjoyment, but so to use what he has, for the good of others, that he may be counted "rich toward God." The things which he has provided shall still be his. The treasure in heaven, which he has laboured to lay up, will make him rich for evermore. He is "rich toward God," through Jesus Christ; rich in the graces of the Gospel; rich in a lively faith; rich in a holy practice. He is rich through merits not his own, in wealth which no work of his could earn; rich in that heavenly inheritance which the love of Almighty God has prepared for believers in his blessed Son.

Christ teacheth how to view worldly wealth.

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, ¹ Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

¹ Matt. 6. 25.

27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven: how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, || neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

|| Or, *live not in careful suspense.*

§ 226. *Why we must not take thought for this life.*

In the parable of the rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully, we have seen the folly of covetousness. We are now to consider what is the disposition with regard to wealth, which, as Christians, we may rightly entertain. It is described by the words "Take no thought." And this means, that we should not harass ourselves with anxious care about our life, what we shall eat, neither for the body, what we shall put on. We must not make this our main study. We must not allow it the place uppermost in our thoughts. The reasons follow: first, because the life is "more than meat, and the body" "than raiment." So that if God has given life, we may rely on it He will provide also food and raiment. Or we may be content without, if He provide it not, rather than be oppressed with anxiety and carefulness. Secondly, we should consider the ravens, which, without any forethought, such as we possess, to gather into barns, yet are fed by our heavenly Father, with little pains of their own. If then we are, as we probably suppose ourselves, better than the fowls, we should trust, that with due industry on our own part, God will give us also all such things as are needful. Thirdly, let us observe how little we gain by the anxiety which is here condemned. The most intense application of our faculties will not help us so much as to add one cubit to our stature. Though we obtain the food we long for, we cannot insure that it will minister to our nourishment and growth. This we must, after all, leave to God, who "giveth the increase." 1 Cor. 3. 7. And why should we not in like manner trust to Him for the increase of the food which He makes to nourish us? Fourthly, we should consider the very herbage and wild flowers, which with no toil of theirs are more finely arrayed than Solomon in all his glory. Yet these, we know, are even more shortlived than man. How much more then will He be sure to clothe us!

Now in all this it is plainly implied that, though we take no care, we must commit no waste, and indulge in no idleness; that, notwithstanding God's bounty, yet "if any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thess. 3. 10. The ravens are not fed without exerting for their support such powers as God has given them. Nor must man expect his providential blessing without labouring, according to his ability, for the supply of all natural wants. They who are duly diligent to day, are the least likely to be distressed about the morrow. They who to day are most idle and extravagant, when the morrow comes will be most full of care. Our Lord does not here preach against due diligence, but against that worldly anxiety which comes of a doubtful mind, that is to say of a feeble faith. And against this He warns us, on purpose that He may the better enforce the true Christian disposition, to seek rather "the kingdom of God." Let but this have its due place as first in our thoughts, and we shall have no difficulty in attaining a right frame of mind in regard to worldly wealth. We shall see clearly of how little value it is in comparison; how little worth our making ourselves unhappy for its sake; how surely, if we seek first things heavenly, these others will be by God bestowed on us, in such measure as He knows to be for the best. And thus we shall be at once thankful for what we have, and content that we have no more; not slothful in business, because we serve the Lord; see Rom. 12. 11, and yet not over careful in it, because we hope to share his glory.

Oh, never may we take that anxious thought for any thing this world can yield, which would distract our wavering hearts from the love of God our Saviour! Never may we forget that to God we owe the life we are so careful to support! Never may we fail to trust that He who created will much more preserve! Never may we neglect the work which He has given us to do, whilst we busy ourselves in that which He has reserved for Himself! Never may we be either cumbered with care, or overtaken in neglect; never hurried, and yet never slothful; but always seeking the kingdom of God, always patient in the work of the Lord!

Christ teacheth to watch.

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; ¹ provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

35 ² Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

39 And ³ this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

¹ Matt. 6. 20.² 1 Pet. 1. 13.³ Matt. 24. 43.§ 227. *Further arguments against a worldly mind.*

These are further arguments from our Lord, in behalf of the duty He has been here enforcing, that, in preference to all earthly things, we should seek first the kingdom of God. First, He tells us, for our encouragement, that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us that kingdom. Nor can any topic be better suited to allay our unchristian fears. It is God's good pleasure. He willeth not the death of a sinner. There is joy in the presence of his angels. In our faithful obedience to his will, in our final enjoyment of his mercy, there is the fulfilment of his own good pleasure. Why then should we fear, either for this world or the next? Why be careful for that maintenance, which God designs to provide? Why doubtful of that inheritance, which it is his delight to give?

Secondly, He instructs us how, by the right use of our worldly means, we may provide ourselves bags which wax not old, even a treasure in the heavens which faileth not. This He thus expresses, "Sell that ye have, and give alms." And the reason follows, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The reason serves to explain, as well as to enforce, the precept. And though the wants of our brethren may now seldom require us to part with what we use ourselves, yet must we so place our treasure in heaven, as that, to increase what we have there, we would gladly give up what we have here. We must renounce all the selfish satisfactions of wealth. We must regard it as if we had parted with it. Nay, we must readily give up a great portion of what we have; keeping little for ourselves here, that we may find much hereafter. How else can our hearts be in heaven? Know we not that, wherever we have property, thither our thoughts frequently are turned? Do we not continually experience that, wherever we have any treasure, as a friend for instance, or a child, though at a distance, there our affections are engaged? Unless then we have treasure in heaven, unless we are persuaded that when we leave this life we shall enter into a heavenly inheritance, how can we have any pleasure in the thought of dying? how can our heart be in heaven? And how, if it be not, how can we expect to be ever there ourselves? How can we reckon to be admitted to joys for which we have no desire? to the company of those for whom we have no love?

Thirdly, the more to turn our thoughts to our eternal inheritance, our Lord reveals this awakening truth; "the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Not merely at a time, when we do not think of his coming, but at a time when we think He will not come; when most in careless ease we reckon ourselves secure from his approach, then does our Lord return, as from the wedding He has been solemnizing in heaven with his church; then does He knock, and require that we be ready to open unto Him immediately. If we knew just when He would come, it would be easy to be ready; as it would be easy to make preparations against thieves in the night, if a man had notice at what hour their attempt would be made. But it is Christ's rule, in the summons of our death, and judgment, to come at an hour when we think not. And it is his promise to his servants, that "if he shall come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and find them watching, blessed are those servants."

They then are blessed who in his absence are continually looking out for his return. And their blessedness is thus described: "he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." He shall treat them not as servants but as friends; receive them, as those whom He well loves, with most kind attention; and satisfy them with the plenteousness of his goodness, in the mansions of eternal bliss. Oh, who that hopes for such a feast as this, who would not watch for the hour of its beginning? Who could forbear reckoning tedious the time, which keeps him from the presence of a Lord so good? Who could think of any other object till it comes? Who could help having his loins always girt, and his light always burning; making all preparation, and hastening with all speed that his thoughts can compass, or his strength admit?

Christ teacheth to be always ready.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them* their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and

to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will || cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

|| Or, cut him off.

§ 228. *The danger and sin of delay.*

We may take these words for an explanation of the parable, as St. Peter calls it, in the passage preceeding; and especially as enforcing the application of that parable: "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Ver. 40. For any servant, however gross his negligence, would be sure to put all things right, if he knew the exact time when his master would return. But in this case we should not reckon that he had truly repented. We should see clearly that the change from misconduct to his duty arose, not from love to his master, but from fear of detection. How vain then is it to put off our own amendment till in sickness, or affliction, or old age, we shall have, as we are, apt to reckon, some more certain notice of our Lord's coming! Even if we were sure of such notice, we have no certainty that we should the better repent on its arrival. For we daily see men indifferent to the saving of their souls, under those very circumstances of warning which appear to ourselves most striking.

And further we learn here, not only that we are not likely to have any such notice, but also that the more we rely on it, the less likely we are to have it. For, observe, it is especially true of those, who reckon with security on such leisure for amendment, it is especially true of these, that their end comes suddenly upon them. It is "if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;" "the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware." Whatever then be our chief head of offence; whether it be smiting our fellow servants, that is, oppression or unkindness to each other; or whether eating and drinking with the drunken, that is, a sensual, slothful, worldly life; if in any of these things we wilfully persist, on the presumption that at some future time we may easily have recourse to the mercy of God; we have so much the less reason to expect any such opportunity to be granted us, we are so much the more sure to be surprised unawares by Him, who has declared of every such presumptuous servant, that He will "cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

It is the peculiar aggravation of such a case as this, that it is sin against light and knowledge. The purpose of repenting at some future occasion, implies of necessity, that we now know ourselves to be wrong; that we know so much of our Lord's will as to know that we are not doing it. We cannot say we were in ignorance if we were intending all the while to do better at some future time. We cannot be ignorant that idleness is sin, if we now purpose to be hereafter more industrious. We cannot help now knowing that covetousness is idolatry, if we now purpose to turn away at some future period from that fondness for wealth which we at present allow. Thus good resolutions, if unfulfilled, are sure witnesses to rise up against us in the day of judgment, and condemn us. Thus does the act of putting off this duty both prove that we know we ought to do it, and aggravate the sinfulness of not doing it. Whenever therefore we are tempted to say, in any way, in our hearts, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" whenever we are inclined to say it, by way of encouraging ourselves to continue in sin; let us remember, that besides a more sudden summons of death, we provoke also by such conduct a more severe measure of punishment. We are in the condition of those to whom much is given, and of whom therefore much will be required: who know their Lord's will and who therefore, if they prepare not accordingly, will be beaten with many stripes.

Lord, never let us count slackness as men count slackness; see 2 Pet. 3. 9; but as knowing that Thou art longsuffering to all, let us endeavour to profit by the time Thou sparest us! Let us study how best to give to all their portion out of what Thou hast entrusted to our care! Let us strive to do so now, that, whensoever Thou comest, we may be found so doing! And the more Thou hast committed to us, either of means or graces, the more of honour let us daily offer, by their due improvement unto Thee.

Christ preacheth to the disciples and to the people.

49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I || straitened till it be accomplished!

51 ¹ Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

54 And he said also to the people, ² When ye see a cloud arise out of the west, straightway ye say, There

cometh a shower; and so it is.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

58 ³ When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

59 I tell thee thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last † mite.

|| Or, pained.

¹ Matt. 10. 34.

² Matt. 16. 2.

³ Matt. 5. 25.

† See Mark 12. 42.

§ 229. *How by right judgment we might avoid divisions.*

This passage contains three important lessons. The first, addressed by Christ to the disciples, is this, that his Gospel will not insure us a peaceable life in this present world. It will indeed, if we truly believe, give us peace in ourselves. But, owing to the evil passions of those, amongst whom true believers live, it will often expose them to persecution and strife from without. The disciples at the first misunderstood the nature of Christ's kingdom. And we may conclude, from the words here addressed to them, that they looked for its immediate establishment amongst mankind, in all outward ease and prosperity. To this notion our Lord opposes his assertion. "I am come to send fire upon the earth," to provoke the fire of persecution, from the evil towards the good; to animate the struggle of truth against falsehood. "I have a baptism to be baptized with;" I have myself great sufferings to undergo. "I am come to give," not peace, but "division;" to reveal truths of such supreme importance, that members of the same family shall be at variance with each other, according to their belief or disbelief of my word. This then should prevent us from ever setting up our rest in this world. It should teach us that our inheritance is elsewhere. It should account to us for the divisions which prevail amongst professing Christians, that they come of man's perversity, and must needs come whilst man is perverse; that they come also of the importance of the things disputed, and are a proof that they are felt to be important. An utter indifference to all points disputed in religion, argues no great reverence for religion itself. These disputes we should be most reluctant to encourage, most anxious to allay. But in the matters disputed we should be most zealous for the prevalence of truth. We should be deeply concerned to have all of one mind. And whilst we seek to win with kindness those who are divided, we should "mark them which cause divisions," "and avoid them." Rom. 16. 17.

"And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is." Here, secondly, He signifies that they paid more attention to the signs of the weather, than to these proofs of his coming, which they refused to discern. And these words well reprove those amongst ourselves, who are in like manner dull to the signs of Christ, slow to apprehend the time of their visitation; who apply to their worldly business or pursuits more patience, more ability and skill, than to the judging of what is right in faith and practice. Never then let us so waste those faculties which God has given us on objects which perish with the using, whilst we neglect to apply our understanding to the truth which can make wise unto salvation. If the children of light were thus wise in their generation, there would be less room for division in their creeds. If they were to apply their whole ability to the discovery of truth, why might they not as thoroughly agree about the things of heaven, as about the things of earth? Why not have as little controversy about the necessity of works unto faith, and of faith unto salvation, as they have about the needfulness of honesty and diligence for worldly wealth and worldly character?

And, thirdly, if we were to judge thus rightly, if we thus estimated all things as they really are, we should see at once the urgent necessity of a prompt and hearty repentance. We are here as on the way to a magistrate. We are placed and we ought to feel that we are so, on our trial. Our adversary is hastening to plead against us the very sins he has seduced us to commit. If now we could really see this to be the case, what diligence should we give to be delivered! What depth of contrition should we feel, what hearty amendment should we instantly commence; that we might avoid the prison, which we can never leave, and be forgiven a debt, which we can never pay!

God deliver us from that adversary, whom we cannot by our own strength escape! God help us to judge of our own selves that which is right! God give us amidst dissension, peace; and amongst the lukewarm, zeal!

Christ preacheth repentance. The barren fig tree.

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall

all likewise perish.

6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

|| Or, debtors.

§ 230. *That the impenitent sinner will be utterly destroyed.*

The Galilæans here spoken of were probably in rebellion against the Roman government, and for this cause put to death by Pilate, in the midst of their sacrificing. The tower of Siloam was a tower in the wall of Jerusalem, which fell, and caused the death of eighteen persons. We learn from our Lord's remark on these occasions, not to judge harshly of those who suffer by the more awful accidents of life; not to attribute their sudden end to any special transgressions of theirs, beyond the sinfulness of their fellow creatures. For though all suffering be God's chastisement for sin, it is made under the Gospel dispensation, a token of God's love to the afflicted. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Heb. 12. 6. And this should serve to convince us of how slight moment is any thing we can endure on earth, when compared with what we hope in heaven. Thus, from the most extreme sufferings of our neighbours, we can draw no other conclusion, than a warning to ourselves to repent. It can never prove them to have been greater sinners. It should always move us, sinners as we know ourselves to be, to repent without delay. It should make us feel that we are never for a moment safe from death; except so far as, through faith in Christ, we are saved from its sting. For though we perish not thus instantly, our destruction, if we repent not, is not the less sure in the end. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" as surely, if not as suddenly, our end, if we be impenitent, shall overtake us with destruction.

To make this the more plain, Jesus sets forth the parable of the barren fig tree, under which is represented the more usual dispensation of God's providence to mankind; more usual than very sudden destruction. We are, each of us, as this fig tree, planted in God's vineyard; placed for a while in this church of his; in order that, when He cometh, He may find in us good fruit. "And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none." How many times must this have been our own sad case! How many times must the eye of God have discerned in our hearts, for devotion vain profession, for practice empty purposes, a worldly instead of a heavenly mind, pride instead of humility, strife instead of love. One there is who makes intercession for us, saying, "Lord, let it alone this year also;" hitherto effectually; but how much longer who dare say? Who but must tremble to think what pains that Holy One has already taken; what labour of love He has expended; what godly motions of his Holy Spirit He has imparted to our hearts in vain!

Certain it is, from his word here set down, that after a time He intercedes no more. "If it bear fruit," said He, "well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." The time of trial is short. It is but as one year to the fig tree. The end, when it comes, is only the more severe, if the respite have been granted in vain. Let us remember then that two things are before us, either to bear fruit, either to glorify God's grace by holiness and love, or to be cut down, and cast out into unquenchable fire. "After that thou shalt cut it down." These are the words of the intercessor Himself. They are the sentence which the Saviour of mankind has uttered, as a warning to the very people He has saved. He has gained for them time. He has given them opportunity. He has secured for them grace for help unto holiness, and pardon on repentance for sin. But He has acknowledged also, that if they notwithstanding refuse to bring forth good fruit, the claims of justice must be fulfilled. The glory of God, if men will not magnify it in their conversion, must be made manifest in their condemnation. This destruction is what we daily see in the order of divine providence. The tree which proves fruitless is rooted up. The useless or inconvenient habitation is pulled down to make room for a house more suitable. Hundreds of seeds are produced for one that ever grows into a plant. Of insects and animals, hundreds fall a prey to each other, for one that proves useful to mankind. Yet in these things there can be no waste, for not a sparrow falls to the ground without our heavenly Father. See Matt. 10. 29. So is it in the destruction of the sinner that is impenitent. For of such hath the Saviour of mankind pronounced, "Thou shalt cut it down." It is God's doing; and therefore it is just. It is the sentence of Christ; and therefore it is surely good. It is best for God's glory. It is most for the good of man. It is in harmony with the will of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

Christ healeth on the sabbath: speaketh in parables.

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *herself*.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called *her to him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid *his hands* on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite*, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or *his ass* from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree: and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three || measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

¹ Matt. 13. 31.

|| See Matt. 13. 33.

² Matt. 9. 35.

§ 231. *That the influence of the Gospel should be progressive.*

The miracle here related was wrought by our Lord without any application from the woman. "He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him." This shews how unjustly the ruler of the synagogue found fault with the people, as though they had pressed to be healed on the sabbath day. And it signifies also how graciously God doth, in Christ, bestow his gifts of grace, beyond what we desire, as well as above what we deserve. And here we should note under what circumstances the woman met with this unlooked for mercy. She was in the synagogue on the sabbath day. She was in the path of duty, observing, to the best of her knowledge, the ordinances of God. She was keeping holy the sabbath day. Let us take care that we observe this day as it is enforced in the Gospel of Christ. Let us spend it in a diligent attendance on the ministry of the church, in patient study of God's word, and in lifting up the soul to heaven by the exercise of prayer and praise. Then will He, who is still with us where two or three are gathered together in his name, call us unto Him, and loose us of our spiritual infirmities; even make us to stand upright in God's sight.

"The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation." Strange that in a world abounding in distress, there should be found any indignant at beholding it relieved! But so fares it often with the proud and selfish. They are jealous of good done by any one but themselves. And they often frame some objection, as did this "hypocrite," to plead instead of the real reason, which they are ashamed to own. But see how our Lord exposes the folly of our censuring others, when we are open to censure ourselves. There was not one in that synagogue, not excepting the ruler, but would loose each sabbath day his beast from the stall, "and lead him away to watering." They understood therefore for themselves that such necessary labour was no profanation of the sabbath. Yet in Jesus they were ready to condemn a work of much more urgent necessity, the loosing of a daughter of Abraham from a long continued infirmity. Let us remember that the same Lord, who exposed this inconsistency in the ruler, can see it no less clearly wheresoever it exists. And against all who so offend, He will no less severely pronounce in the day of judgment, "Thou hypocrite." Since then Christ will thus put all his adversaries to shame, let us endeavour to be numbered amongst those who rejoice for all the glorious things that are done by Him. Let his Gospel in our hearts, however small may have been its influence at the first, pervade at length, each thought and feeling. Let it be to us as the seed that grew, and waxed a great tree, as the leaven that leavened the whole of the meal; a shelter in the storms of life, a secret vigour in the bonds of death. And let us endeavour to promote this happy influence of the Gospel as widely as we can throughout the world. Let us hope that the tree of truth, once rooted in our hearts, may be extended by our means amongst our neighbours; that the leaven of grace, with which we once are leavened, may not stop short of leavening all mankind. We cannot too often call to mind how greatly this depends upon ourselves. We cannot think too humbly of our own importance, or too highly of that divine wisdom, which out of the very smallest seed can raise so large a tree, which by means of each single particle of leaven, by each action of the least of Christ's disciples, can leaven so many measures of meal, can influence for good so many hearts of men.

Christ exhorteth to strive; reproveth Herod.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 ¹ Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 ² But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east, and from

¹ Matt. 7. 13.

² Matt. 7. 23.

the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 ³ And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

34 ⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not?

35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

³ Matt. 19. 30.

⁴ Matt. 23. 37.

§ 232. *That to die is being perfected.*

How many shall be saved, it was not our Lord's purpose here to answer. Only He lets us know that there are many who "shall not be able," as well as many who "shall sit down in the kingdom of God." But chiefly He here tells us, for the instruction of all, that the gate to heaven is strait, and that none can enter in except they strive. A life of ease then is not a Christian life. A life of resting as we are, is not a Christian life. And this we shall find to be the case at that hour when the master of the house shall shut to the door. To eat and drink in his presence, to acknowledge Him for Lord in our daily meals, to have Him teach in our streets, to hear his word continually preached, these things may indeed encourage many to knock at the door, and to say, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But if our religion have consisted in mere form, in hearing without doing, in prayer and praise without devotion and zeal, we must expect no other answer at that day, than "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Let us learn then ever to strive unto the very end of life. Let us feel, that if we strive not, we cannot be right. Let us consider in charity of others, that they often may be striving when we cannot see; and let us in humility acknowledge of ourselves, how often we are not striving when it is thought that we are. Then shall we be not surprised to be told that "there are last which shall be first;" sinners most vile who shall in the end be saved. Then shall we feel not unconcerned to hear, that there are also "first which shall be last:" professors, esteemed most eminent, who shall be lost for ever.

When the Pharisees tried to alarm our Saviour by the mention of Herod, He expressed his resolution to work miracles notwithstanding Herod's cruelty and cunning. "To day and tomorrow," He expresses it; meaning each day of his short continuance on earth. "And the third day I shall be perfected;" meaning that he should soon depart from this present world. Here let us also resolve to continue patient in well doing, however many be the perils that beset our success. Let us in our purposes work not only to morrow, but to day, "whilst it is called to day;" Heb. 3. 13: and to morrow, if to morrow we be spared; let us work the good work which Christ has set us here to do; let us lead the good life of holiness and love which He has led before. Then shall we also the third day be perfected. When our days shall end, their end shall be eternity. Death shall be to us the conclusion of all that here is evil, the perfecting of all that here is good.

In Jerusalem that is on earth, iniquity is still permitted to abound. Her prophets still encounter opposition. Her children still perversely refuse, when Christ would gather them together, "as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings." He uses not force, but hope and fear and love; He exhorts, He promises, He prays. But they will not. That will which He has imparted to them they abuse against Himself. But not so is it in the heavenly Jerusalem. Not so will it be with us when we "shall be perfected." There God's will shall be our will also. There his glory will be our joy. His goodness will then be the pattern of our own. And this if we now know and feel, how joyfully should we say, from our inmost hearts, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Blessed is He that cometh, and blessed is the day when He shall appear! Blessed is the hour when they who through faith have loved, shall enter with Him into their heavenly inheritance!

Christ healeth the dropsy: preacheth humility.

1 And it came to pass as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were

¹ Prov. 26. 6, 7.

§ 233. *That we should esteem others better than ourselves.*

Here we read that our Lord "went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day." And afterwards it is said, "he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms." So that the Pharisees allowed themselves on the sabbath day to feast their friends and acquaintances, though they would not have had Jesus so much as heal the sick. Well may we hence take warning against straining at a gnat in the case of others, while for ourselves we are swallowing a camel; see Matt. 23. 24; against pulling out a mote from our brother's eye, when we have, all the while, a beam in our own. See Matt. 7. 3, 4, 5.

Our Lord is said to have answered these Pharisees about healing on the sabbath, though we hear not of their having spoken on the subject. For thoughts are to Him as plain as words; and whether we speak, or hold our peace, He hears. "And they held their peace." Not out of humility, but in sullenness; not because they were unwilling, but unable to gainsay our Lord's conclusion. There is a time when silence is a duty. There is a time when to hold our peace is sin. When we ought to own ourselves in the wrong, when we ought to give glory unto God or to ask forgiveness of each other; then, let us remember, that not to speak at all may convict us, before God, of no less pride and malice, than the utterance of anger or conceit. "And he took him, and healed him, and let him go." The contradiction of sinners should be no obstacle to our doing good. Whether by silence or by words of provocation, whether by opposing, or only refusing to help, they would discourage us in our works of Christian love, our best of answers is to do the good they civil at, to heal the evil they complain of, but allow.

Besides justifying his practice of doing good on the sabbath day, and healing the man afflicted with a dropsy, our Lord designed also, in his visit to this Pharisee, to provide an antidote against pride, that dropsy of the soul, which thirsts ever the more painfully, the more freely it is indulged. And his rule is, that in lowliness of mind we esteem others better than ourselves. See Phil. 2. 3. For this is meant by our going and sitting down in the lowest room. This world is the place of the entertainment here described. God it is who bids both us and all around us to plenty, peace, and welcome. He it is who gives us nourishment both of body and of soul; He who assigns success to diligence, to prayer the gifts of grace; He who insures to them, who leave all for Christ, either abundance in this present world, or, if little, contentment with that little. But at this feast He suffers each to take, as it were, in his own mind, his own place. We sit down according as we are proud or humble, either in the chief rooms or in the lowest; we count ourselves worthy of greater or of less honour than God has allotted to us; we say to ourselves, either how much better or how much worse am I off, than I deserve, in comparison with my neighbours. Thus whatever place God has given us, we are apt, in our imaginations, to take another for ourselves; higher, if we be highminded; but it must be lower, if, in lowliness of mind, we would esteem others better than ourselves.

Let us then mark here the sentence of Him who has invited us. To the proud it is, "Give this man place." To the humble it is, "Friend, go up higher." Thus does He say often in this present world. Often here does He "put down the mighty from their seat, and exalt the humble and meek." See Luke 1. 52. But it is in the visitation of the last day; it is when He "shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts 17. 31, by that blessed Son, who for our sakes became the servant of all: then it is that whosoever has here exalted himself shall be utterly abased; then he, who has here humbled himself, shall be exalted for evermore. And this humility, let us remember, must be in the heart. Mere worldly courtesy may make us take the lowest seat. We must do more; we must think that it best fits us. Mere pride may make us affect to be condescending. We must do more; we must feel ourselves too low to condescend.

God give us, if our estate be high, the grace to think lowly of ourselves! And if our estate be low, God make our hearts still lower!

Christ teacheth to feast the poor. The parable of the supper.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a

piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

¹ Tob. 4. 7.

² Rev. 19. 9.

³ Matt. 22. 2.

§ 234. *The peril of abusing things lawful.*

It was at a feast, and in the house of a Pharisee, that our Lord spake these words. He takes the occasion for explaining what feast we may best give, and whom we may best invite. And He turns the attention of the guests, from the supper they were then eating, to the kingdom of God; to that heavenly feast, from which so many pray to be excused, though there is in it ample room for all. Let us learn at whatever house we are, and in whatever business engaged, always to turn our thoughts, and often our conversation, to that holiness which should be every man's main business; to that heaven, which should be every man's dearest hope.

We have here a comparison between two methods of making a dinner or a supper. "Call not thy friends," but "call the poor," means, if thou wouldest call thy friends, much more call the poor. Christ forbids not our entertaining those who can invite us in return; but He urges us to consider how much more important as a religious duty, is the providing for the maimed, the lame, the blind. The one we do readily enough, for our own present pleasure. The other He would have us do, out of regard to that recompense, which will not be given till the resurrection of the just. For this it is that proves our faith in what is now unseen. This it is which shews whether or no we love Him, who considers as done unto Himself whatsoever good we do unto one of the least of these his brethren. And here observe to what degree this hospitality towards the poor must extend. Christ bids us to do the one, and not the other, Can this possibly mean less, than that we should spend, in the doing of good, more time, more thought, more money, or money's worth, than in the feasting those who in return feast us.

"One of them that sat at meat with him" seems to have understood our Lord to promise at the resurrection of the just, some such feast as he was now partaking of. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Christ teaches therefore that a great supper is but a figure of the felicity hereafter to be enjoyed; representing the abundance of God's mercy provided for mankind, and furnishing also a striking illustration of our frequent neglect and perversity. "They all with one consent began to make excuse." This is no more than what takes place daily in this Christian land. God invites us to his supper. For our satisfying, He has prepared the good things of the Gospel. Purity and humility and zeal, faith and hope and charity; these He has set before us. These He has put within our reach. With these He would fain nourish our empty souls. "Come; for all things are now ready." This is what He says daily by his word, by his servants the ministers of Christ, by the ordinances which He deals out through their hands, to that church which is his chosen company.

But how many does He thus invite without success! The purchase of ground, the proving of oxen, the marrying of a wife, what are these but the very cares of the world, which at this hour, with this very passage before their eyes, men still dare unblushingly to plead, for the neglect of Christian privileges? And what is it that in these things is sinful? Not the having them, or the doing them; but the neglecting for their sake the love of Christ, which is the one thing needful. Things lawful are thus full of peril to the soul, if they tempt us to reply to any bidding of our Lord, "Therefore I cannot come;" if they bring us under that fearful sentence: "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." When we reflect on the fulfilment of these words, as against the whole nation of the Jews, let us study to escape from them ourselves. And, whilst we thankfully enjoy the many blessings which God allows us here to use, let us never suffer them to displace in our affections the heaven which He has revealed to our faith.

Christ teacheth perseverance. The parable of the salt.

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 ¹ If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not

able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

34 ² Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹ Matt. 10. 37.

² Matt. 5. 13.

§ 235. *How a Christian must hate, and what.*

It was when great multitudes went with Him, that Christ "turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This then is not a counsel, addressed exclusively to the more eminent in piety, but one which concerns all Christians without exception. All He would have to live at enmity with the world, at once estranged from its pleasures, and averse to any excessive indulgence in its allowed and allowable affections. All He would have to take up their cross; all to count the cost of being Christians: even as one who builds a tower, or a king who goes to war, is used first to consider how much he must expend. How ill do we comply with this advice, if we study rather to conceal from ourselves the amount of our obligations! How far must we be from being disciples of Christ, if we never give up, much less hate, simply for his sake, the practice of any single sin, or the society of any friend who inclines us to transgress!

Let us, then, no longer look only, or chiefly, to the immediate advantages of Christian conduct. Rather let us be prepared to obey Christ to our present harm and loss. Let us enter upon the calculation here forced on our attention. Let us consider what complete selfdenial and restraint, in regard to all which here we most love, is implied in this one word, hatred. And to what does this amount? That we should really hate either our kindred or any single fellow creature? Far from it. It is the express new commandment of our Lord, that we should all love one another. And especially He would have us love those most near to us, with a love far more excellent and pure, than without his Gospel we could ever have conceived. The precept then though literal, is comparative. We are to love our brethren, we are to love our kindred, even those who obey not Christ; but we are to love Him so much more deeply and devoutly, that, compared with the affection we owe to Him, our love to our best friends on earth is hatred. We must so love Him, that for his sake we would oppose, if needful, their wishes, reject their endearments, and even renounce their society. In short we must act as those who hate, and so as that they too, in their ignorance of our motives, will count us to be hating, though all the while we love most kindly. Thus we must act, however painfully to ourselves; nay, thus we ought to act with cheerfulness and joy; whenever we are thereto called by the love we owe to Christ.

These directions were most necessary to the early converts, who, at the first preaching of the Gospel were often opposed by their families and friends, in their desire to become disciples of Christ. Nay often their very lives were put in jeopardy, by their public profession of the Christian faith. But often also, in our own Christian community, the wishes of our friends are inconsistent with what we know of the commands of Christ. And in such a case how profitably might we bear in mind this rule of Christian enmity, thus directed against every thing that would entice us into sin! "Yea, and his own life also." Our very life, if it be a life of iniquity, and in proportion as it is employed, not in pleasing, but in offending God, our very life should be abomination in our own eyes. What thus we hate we should long to part with, to part with by changing it for the better. We should so hate our life of sin, as to labour in amending it: so hate our friends that would lead us astray, as to pray and strive for their conversion. Thus might our Christian hatred be all one with Christian love. Thus might we ourselves be as salt, at once to season others, and to maintain our own purity. And thus might we escape the being counted like salt that has lost its savour, fit only to be cast out.

God teach us so to love our Lord, that, compared with Him, we may hate all others! God make us so to hate what is evil, as to love that which is good! God help us to love both friends and enemies, even as Christ has loved us; in love to leave them when we ought, and when we may, in love also to return; in love to labour for their good, that good, the saving of the soul!

The parables of the lost sheep, and the piece of silver.

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 'What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice

with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

|| Matt. 18. 12.

|| *Drachma*, here translated a piece of silver, is the eighth part of an ounce, which cometh to seven pence half-penny, and is equal to the Roman penny, Matt. 18. 28.

§ 236. *That God willeth not the death of a sinner.*

We should first notice the occasion on which these parables were spoken by our Lord; it was when there "drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." And though they were uttered in reply to the murmurs of the self righteous Pharisees, we may take them for a pattern of the kind of arguments, which Christ thought most effectual for the conviction of acknowledged sin, for the conversion of notorious sinners. When therefore we ourselves most deeply feel our own iniquity in the sight of God let us turn to these lively assurances of his readiness to forgive, of his satisfaction in forgiving. To represent to us these dealings of the Almighty, our Lord describes the joy which would be felt by a man, who, having lost one sheep out of a hundred should succeed in finding it; or by a woman, who out of ten pieces of silver should in like manner lose and find one. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

This then is the main thing which these parables enforce; the willingness of God to forgive, not the proportion of mankind that go astray, which is neither as one to an hundred, nor as one to ten. Nay, "all we like sheep have gone astray." Isa. 53. 6. All we are lost; even the souls that were at the first stamped with God's image; all lost amidst the filth of sin; lost for ever, unless found in Christ. Neither, therefore, is it here implied, that there are in the world just persons, who need no repentance; either in the proportion of ninety nine to one, or indeed in any proportion at all. But this Christ here teaches, that God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; that God takes pains to recall us to his flock; that He looks for us, waits for us with all longsuffering; that He rejoices when we are found, even with such liveliness of joy as is felt on the recovery of what had been counted to be lost. Such at least is the joy felt by angels, such is the joy felt in their presence; and where they are, there God is; and where God is, there they have no joy but his.

What a motive, above all others, to constrain us to repent, is afforded by this declaration of our Lord! What a thought to affect our very hearts is this, that the good purposes we form are beheld with approbation by the heavenly host; that by turning them in earnest unto God, we may raise joy in that place where sorrow is unknown! How kind is that Almighty Father who deigns thus to represent to our faint apprehensions his readiness to receive us on our returning to his love! How ungracious, how perverse, must be that soul of man, that can hear these tidings, and not comprehend their meaning; can know them, and yet not joyfully receive them! Who but would have thought, that when we were at enmity with God, He must have been at enmity with us also? Who but would expect of One so great and good, that He must utterly abominate his rebellious creatures when grovelling in the mire of fleshly lusts, or when wandering in the maze of worldly cares, or wilful infidelity? But, behold, even in our most estranged condition, He looks with anxiety for our recovery! Behold even from our most grievous sins He receives us with joy on our return! Thus did He when Adam fell. Thus did He when in Adam all died. Thus does He in those sins of manifold infirmity which are daily committed even by his faithful people. He seeks us, ere ever we seek Him. He watches for us, whilst we think only of ourselves. Whilst we rest, He works in our behalf. Whilst we forget, He loves.

Oh, may we seek Him, who thus seeks us! May we return, whithersoever we have strayed; may we return with contrition to the fold we have deserted! In whatsoever we have been lost, or rather have lost ourselves, may we be found, found of God through Christ, found in Him, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith! See Phil. 3.

The parable of the two sons.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:
 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

§ 237. *The progress of conversion.*

The parable of the two sons is added to those of the lost sheep and piece of mancey, for our further encouragement unto effectual repentance. Let us not content ourselves with applying it to the case of the Gentiles and the Jews; the one reclaimed, and the other grudging their restoration to the favour of God. Neither let us suppose that it applies only to those amongst us who spend their substance in riotous living; that they especially have a title to the forgiveness here described, or that they only have occasion for the repentance here enforced. Have we not all received from our heavenly Father, as it were a goodly heritage, our life, our youth, our strength; all the opportunities of improvement, all the motions of grace, that have been imparted to us from our birth to this present hour? And have we not in many respects wasted these our goods in a country far from God? Have we not spent prodigally our precious time, in that which we now feel to be only vanity and vexation of spirit? Have we not experienced, after trying the pleasures or comforts of the world, that there is a mighty famine in that land, that in it there is nothing to satisfy the craving of the soul, nothing but as the husks which the swine do eat; even food which fits not the renewed man, treasures which make not his soul rich, joys which make not his soul happy? Have we not felt as if far from God; as if in want, and no one to relieve us; as if ruined, and lost, and dead? If this have been our case, and it is the case of every one, in proportion as he has to any degree indulged in sin; if these are our convictions, and they are the convictions of all, in proportion as they are enlightened by the truth; let us learn now what further is required of us, by considering what is here set down for our imitation, in the behaviour of the prodigal son.

First "he came to himself." This then is one step in our recovery. As long as we live at enmity with God we are no better than out of our senses. We have eyes, yet see not, ears have we yet hear not; reason, and yet cannot understand; sense, and yet cannot perceive. We doat on trifles. We neglect matters of most vital concern to us, death and judgment, heaven and hell. First then let us come to ourselves. Let us see in its true light the supreme necessity of caring for the soul, the supreme importance of that spiritual work, which our Lord has here given us to do. Next observe in the prodigal the reflection which he uttered, the resolution which he formed. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" How large, let us consider, is God's mercy; how comprehensive his redeeming love; how boundless to all who seek his face are his promises, his gifts, his goodness! "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." How profitable is it in our sense of sin, how helpful to our contrition and amendment, still to regard God as a Father; still to bear in mind that He loves us; and, instead of trusting in any amendment of our own, to cast ourselves, with confession of unworthiness, on his mercy, and on the merits of our Saviour. But the prodigal not only said these words. He did what He resolved. "He arose and came to his father." And though received with all kindness by a forgiving parent, he neglected not his purpose of contrition, he professed himself, whilst in the arms of his reconciled parent, unworthy to be called his son.

Never then let us presume on mercy, either to sin beforehand, or, when forgiven, to cease from confession of our offences! Never let us forget, when we sin, that it is against heaven, and in the sight of God! Never let us doubt when we would wish to reform, that God is more ready to hear than we to pray, more willing to forgive than we to repent!

The parable of the two sons concluded.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and importuned him,

29 And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

§ 238. *How we should rejoice in the conversion of a sinner.*

"Make me as one of thy hired servants," ver. 19. was part of what the younger son designed to say to his father. No condition seemed to himself too low for his deserts. So entirely ought we also, when convinced of sin, to humble our souls before God. But before he could complete his profession of unworthiness, the father interrupted him, and said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." No kindness seemed too great for the expression of his love. So glad is our heavenly Father to do more than we desire as well as more than we deserve! So kindly does He both invite us to Himself, and when we come, turn our shame to glory, our mourning into joy and gladness. Here too we see what things they are which cause pleasure in heaven, and which should chiefly therefore delight us whilst on earth; not wealth and plenty; not splendour, gaiety, or indulgence of the sense; but the victory of good over evil, the conversion of a sinner from the error of his way.

And yet these are things in which many seem to take no interest at all. Nay there are some, who like the elder brother here described, seem to grudge that any should share with themselves God's favour, and are sorry instead of glad, to think, that the prodigal and the profligate may be admitted through grace into the kingdom of heaven. These are they who conceive themselves, in their spiritual pride, to have served God more faithfully than their neighbours, and who eagerly enlarge upon the faults of others, as if they themselves must gain on the comparison. Like the labourers in the vineyard, they complain that such as have wrought less than themselves, should be allowed to receive as much. They ask, with the elder brother, what these things mean. They are angry; observe the folly of the proud! they dare to be angry with God. They refuse to go in. They think heaven itself scarce worth having, if there they should have to meet with such as they there despise.

This evil temper is exposed by our Lord, in all its deformity. He shews it to be directly opposite to that love which was his new commandment. He shews it to be inconsistent with what the elder son enjoyed of his father's daily favour. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." How ungrateful then to say that nothing has been given thee, when thou hast every thing at thy disposal; thy brother's share having been already allotted, and what remains being as much thine, if saved for thee, as if given to thee now to spend. But being thine, it is thy duty to spend it on this occasion. "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad;" we, out of that which is mine and thine. For else thou must transgress my commandment, to rejoice with them that do rejoice. See Rom. 12. 15. And with what friend shouldst thou be so ready to make merry, as with him whom thou hast called "this thy son," and who is therefore "this thy brother:" who "was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

However eminent then may have been our devotion, however long our service unto God, however high our expected commendation; all this, we here learn, we must expect to lose if we either rejoice over the iniquity of our brethren, or grieve their being pardoned in God's good time. For we should thus be in point of charity, defaulters no less than as in God's sight, than they have been in point of temperance or honesty, of meekness, purity, or truth. Let us rejoice therefore in the forgiveness of sinners, that thus we may insure our own. Let us rejoice in their behalf, when they do right. When they sin, let us be so truly grieved, that we can neither speak nor think of their offence without lively concern and reproof. And when, by God's grace they repent and amend, let us be so truly glad, that in our Father's house there is ample room for them and us. Let us be ready to hope that if we would be ourselves, there they may, through Christ, be also. This might we do, if we are always in charity with all mankind: if, like God, we love them that love not us, and those that love not Him. *

The unjust steward.

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, what shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred || measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred † measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four score.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the ‡ mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

|| The word *Batus* in the original containeth nine gallons three quarts.

† The word here interpreted a *measure* in the original containeth about fourteen bushels and a pottle.

‡ Or, riches.

§ 239. *The right use of worldly goods.*

We have elsewhere a lesson of heavenly wisdom from the conduct of an unjust judge. We have here another from an unjust steward. Whence we may take occasion to observe that there is no wickedness in this world which may not afford us some useful instruction, if only we take a right Christian view of it. God can in all cases bring good out of evil. And He would have us, for ourselves, derive from the sight of sin the resolutions of watchfulness in prayer, of prudence, and forethought in our heavenly calling.

This steward was accused of having wasted his master's goods. Let us remember, if we are guilty of the like offence in the talents God has committed to our charge, the same sentence will soon be sounded in our ears, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." Under a lively apprehension of this summons, we may do well to say within ourselves, "What shall I do?" And we may do well to take a lesson for our behaviour, from the prudence, though not from the dishonesty, of the unjust steward. He was dismissed for wasting his master's goods; and he wasted them still further, that he might make to himself friends in his dismissal. He charged those who were in his master's debt, with sums less than what they owed. And his master, the rich man, here called "the lord, commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely." This was giving him credit for cleverness, as any worldly minded master might have done; instead of blaming him for doing what was unjust. And this may shew us, how carefully we should refrain from speaking lightly of sin, whether we are masters or servants; how ill it becomes a Christian to praise that conduct as wise, which he ought rather to abhor as unjust.

Thus did the master of the steward, "the lord" who had been himself wronged by his servant's dishonesty. But what sentence is it that our Lord delivers on the occasion? Does He commend the unjust steward? Far from it. He remarks upon this conduct for the perpetual condemnation of the unjust, and of all kinds of transgressors; He remarks how much more wise are the children of this world, in their generation, than the children of light are in theirs. He adds, as his own practical application of the parable, after commenting on what "the lord" had said, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Here then we have both reproof for our spiritual foolishness, and instruction towards our increase in spiritual wisdom. Compared with the lovers of the world we take not so much pains for heavenly treasure, as they do for that which is on earth; we use not as much patience, labour, forethought, skill, for the crown of glory which fadeth not away, as they for the vanities of this present life, for what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, for things which perish in the using. This is our reproof; and our instruction follows. Whilst we think more of treasure in heaven, and less of our earthly goods, we should use these latter so as to help towards the former; so as to be the better prepared against the day, when it shall be said to all, whether diligent or idle, whether honest or unjust, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." It is not the steward who is held up to our imitation, but his forethought. Nor is even his forethought commended by our Lord, but mentioned as commended by his own master. It is not worldly wisdom that we are to learn from his behaviour; nor are they worldly friends that we are to make. For we are to make them by a Christian use of the mammon of unrighteousness, of those riches, talents, and time, which are commonly wasted in sinful indulgence. And the more we are wise in our generation, as children of light, the more we shall be inclined to seek for heaven, at all cost of our worldly riches, at all risk of losing our earthly friends.

Help us, Lord, to dig diligently, for the treasures which are at thy disposal! Make us not ashamed to beg for those good things, which Thou alone canst give!

Christ reproveth the covetous Pharisees.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous *||* mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 ¹ No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous,

|| Or, riches.

¹ Matt. 6. 24.

² Matt. 11. 12.

³ Matt. 5. 18.

⁴ Matt. 5. 32.

heard all these things: and they derided him.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

16 ² The Law and the Prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17 ³ And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

18 ⁴ Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

§ 240. *That the judgment of God differs from man's.*

These verses, occurring between two parables, are in some measure connected with both; and help to point them the more forcibly against that love of riches which our Saviour here chiefly condemns. The moral of the whole chapter is this, that we should make a wise use of our present possessions, with a view to our everlasting habitations. And with this intent our Lord here argues, that our faithfulness in this unrighteous mammon is a fair test or trial, of whether we are fit or unfit to be entrusted with the riches of eternity. The one is indeed "least," in itself a trifle of no worth; the other "much," even more than we can desire or deserve. The one is "unrighteous;" as being usually spent in unrighteousness, or as being itself unjust, false, not being what it pretends to be. The other is "true," real, and yielding all the advantage it professes. The one is "another man's," foreign to the Christian, of no value except when rightly spent for the good of others. Whilst the latter is "our own;" counted so for Christ's sake, by whose grace alone it is committed to us. And yet the one is to be the test of whether we are fit for the other. For so has our Lord ordained; He who is Himself "our righteousness;" but who will not count us to be righteous through faith in Him, unless our faith bring forth good works.

He next adds, what He had insisted on before, that it is impossible to serve at once two masters; implying that we can serve only one, we must look to one only for our payment. So that if we would have God's wages, we must here do his work. And to do his work, we must love his word. And to love his work, we must love Himself. And to love Him, we must believe in Him, even have faith in Christ. Then shall we gladly take Him for our Master, employ to his honour what is his, not ours, and receive from his hand those riches, which are ours, only because He freely gives them.

The Pharisees "who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided him." This is what all covetous people do. For what else but mockery is it, to set at nought his counsel for the employment of their wealth? And what, short of foolish, do they reckon a Christian, who spends all his substance as a steward of Christ? If ever this scornful language should meet our ears, let us call to mind the rebuke here pronounced by our Lord. Let us consider how widely the judgment of man differs from the judgment of God; how what the one highly esteems, may be, and often is, abomination in the Other's sight. This is the case with wealth, if acquired by dishonesty, if hoarded with fond affection, if wasted in luxurious living. It may still command the respect of the multitude, conciliate the voice of flattery, and secure to its possessor, at his pleasure, all the goods that man can barter. But it is at the same time abomination in the sight of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. See Hab. 1. 12.

This was the case also with that pretended zeal for the Law, on the ground of which the Pharisees objected to the Gospel. It might pass with men for a fair excuse, it might preserve for the objectors high repute among their fellows. But in the sight of God it was abomination, because in his sight it was seen to be hypocrisy. For the preaching of John gave ample warning that the Law and the Prophets were to be thenceforth fulfilled in the Gospel. And they were to be fulfilled, as in the law of divorce, by a more pure and spiritual interpretation. And is not this the case also with the different systems on which the Gospel itself has been preached in the world? Must we not fear of some of the schemes for its support, which among men have been most highly esteemed, that they have been little better than abomination in God's sight? Never then let us set up the moral law, as an objection to the doctrine of the Gospel. Never let us doubt of gospel doctrine that it fulfils and comprehends the moral law. Least of all let us be influenced in our views of truth by considering which opinions are of best repute in the world. The judgment of the best may sometimes fail. The judgment of many is often false. The church itself is liable to err. The world is always wrong.

The rich man and Lazarus.

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day :

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in

thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house :

28 For I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

§ 241. *The perils of wealth.*

It is possible then for a man to have all that wealth can purchase, and yet to die, and to be buried ; aye, and to be also in torments. And this is the first general lesson which this parable seems designed to inculcate ; even as our Lord had before declared, that what is highly esteemed among men may be all the while abomination in the sight of God. See ver. 15. And some such contrast as this parable affords, was no more than necessary, to confound our high notions of worldly wealth ; so much are we accustomed to see it coveted, and the wealthy so highly honoured, envied, and adored. Here then we see what wealth may come to ; what it is sure to come to, if it have been ill gotten, if it have been ill spent, nay if it have not been spent well. For we have here little said against this rich man, except that he possessed riches, and spent them in fine clothing, and sumptuous fare. The chief thing set before us is, how rich he was. And the chief thing we have to observe is this, that after all the enjoyment of his riches, he died and was buried ; and was tormented in that flame which is never quenched. Whilst Lazarus, who during his life time had suffered at once from abject poverty, and from loathsome disease, "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." And can we, after this, be any longer dazzled with this world's vanities ? Can we any longer hesitate to seek first that treasure in heaven, which is freely offered through God's grace alike to rich and poor ?

But further, prosperity in this world not only may end, as we seem scarce to think possible, in eternal misery ; it may even be the cause of that misery. If abused, if enjoyed without thankfulness, if spent without consideration of Christian duty, it will aggravate the sufferings of those who shall in the end be condemned. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." How great then is the responsibility of being rich ! How gracious that dispensation of the Almighty, which has ordered to so far the larger portion of mankind the less perilous condition of being poor ! How grievous is the end of receiving good things, without doing good works ! How much better is it here to receive evil things, and so to live as to receive good hereafter !

And here note further at what period our sentence becomes unalterable, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." No change to affect our eternal condition can take place after the close of this transitory life. The moment of death must determine, God only knows how soon, the condition of our souls for ever. What a fearful moment must that be to those, who have been in this world "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." 2 Tim. 3. 4. But how full of joy to the faithful servant, to him who has here shared the cross of Christ, how full of joy is the thought, that, once in bliss, he is there for ever. No temptation can there beset him ; no sin there make him fall. Though he would pass thence, he cannot.

Lastly, observe the reply of Abraham to the proposal of sending Lazarus, that he might warn the rich man's brethren. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." How foolish then, how faithless is it, to imagine that our faithlessness and sin are for want of better warning ! How vain to plead that we would be more holy, if we were more assured : that we would repent, if we were to see one rise from the dead ! We have Moses and the prophets. We have Christ and his apostles. Do we, or do we not hear them ? Nay, we have one risen from the dead, even Jesus, the first fruits of them that slept. Are we, or are we not persuaded ? Do we, or do we not repent ? Do we, or do we not believe, so as to lead new and Christian lives ? If not, let us at least not wait for warnings more awful, proofs more clear ; but strive to profit more, to our eternal joy, by those we already have.

The master and servant.

1 Then said he unto the disciples, ¹ It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come!

2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3 Take heed to yourselves: ² If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

6 ³ And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore

tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink.

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

¹ Matt. 18. 7.

² Matt. 18. 21.

³ Matt. 17. 20.

§ 242. *That we are unprofitable servants.*

"It is impossible but that offences will come;" impossible according to the order of our present dispensation. It is implied in the very nature of our trial, that we may ourselves transgress. And from the frame of our society it follows, that we may also tempt others to sin. Let us never then be disheartened at the sight of evil all around us. Christ has told us beforehand that it was sure to come. Only let us take heed that we help not to promote it. He has no less plainly denounced woe to all those by whom offences come. Far be it therefore from us to imagine, that the prevalence of offences in the world can make it safe for us to commit them! Far be it from us, by any word or deed of ours, to make a brother to offend! Though he be but as a little one, abject in our estimation, he is, we may be sure, dear in God's sight. And for us, rather than to make him fall, it were better to be cast with a millstone about the neck into the depth of the sea.

And on the other hand let us take heed that we ourselves stumble not at the conduct of our brother. However frequently he trespass against us, let us as often, though it were seven times in one day, forgive. This is a duty on which our Lord continually insists. And why? Because He was aware how slow we should be to practise it. Herein we have need, all of us, very greatly to amend. Here we have need earnestly to pray, like the apostles, "Lord, increase our faith:" not the faith they asked for, by which miracles were wrought, but that by which passions are subdued, and hearts are changed. To be convinced of our own sinfulness; to be persuaded of God's readiness to pardon, by reason of the atonement of our Lord; to remember his condition, so repeatedly expressed, that, if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will He forgive us ours; a belief in these things unseen, such a belief as Christ alone can give us, this faith if we had genuine, though never so feeble, we might say to the spirit of revenge within us, "Be thou plucked up by the root," "and it should obey."

But if thus we should succeed in subduing any evil temper, or in attaining any excellency of grace, let us beware of imagining that we have achieved, in proportion to our success, any very great service to God. And on the other hand, if we fall short, let us beware of excusing ourselves, as though success were beyond our reach. It is no more than our bounden duty that God requires. That we forgive our offending brother, or bring forth any other fruit of faith, to the honour of our Lord and Saviour, what is this but the very work we stand engaged to perform? Is the slave more the property of his master, than we, who are God's creatures, the work of his hands, servants whom Christ has bought with a price, even with his own most precious blood? And know we not, how even with servants that are hired, their whole time is paid for by their master, and is employed in their master's work? From ploughing and feeding cattle in the morning, they turn not to their own refreshment, till first they have served at supper in the evening. And yet they look not for extraordinary thanks, because this is the very work they hired themselves to do; and for their hiring, and for their wages, they need be thankful themselves. Such is the obligation of earthly service; such the relation of master and servant upon earth; where each ministers to the convenience of the other. Such also is our heavenly service; except that here the benefit is altogether on one side. God gives us both food and raiment; both life, and in our death, the hope of glory. What give we unto Him in return? Repentance, and that usually such as needs to be repented of. And though we could even give Him unsinning obedience; what profit could it be to Him who inhabiteth eternity? How could we do more than it is our duty to do?

May He make us to do all that we are commanded! May He enable us to take heed and do nothing that we are forbidden! May we feel, as well as say, that we are unprofitable servants! May we be thankful that we are counted to be his servants at all!

Christ healeth ten lepers.

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, ¹ Go shew yourselves *unto* the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.

16 And fell down on *his* face nt his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

¹ Lev. 14. 2.

§ 243. *How few are thankful.*

In this history we have a lively picture of that unthankfulness, which we often complain of in each other; but which we have more need to amend in ourselves. The ten lepers, when they wanted our Lord's assistance, all "lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." But one only, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God." How many, when they are overtaken by affliction, when sickness has laid low their strength, or death stares them in the face, how many then acknowledge Jesus for their Master, cry loudly for his help, and proclaim their dependence on his mercy! But when health is restored, when friends that we thought lost, are recovered, when our affairs again flourish, and when it is our duty to give God the glory, must we not then ask, with Jesus, of ourselves, "Where are the nine?"

We have, each of us, many temporal advantages to acknowledge. That we have been born in a fruitful and pleasant land; that we live under good laws, and these uprightly administered; that we enjoy a peaceful state, where it is our own fault if we do not our work with cheerfulness, and eat our bread with quietness, looking for, and hasting unto the home of heaven; all this we have from God received, for all this each of us owe our thanks to God. "But where are the nine?" Much more have we to be thankful for the hope of heaven, for the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ, for the having been washed by the waters of baptism, and for the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Truly we may say, all are cleansed; all helped, as well as exhorted, through Christ, to become holy as God is holy, and pure as he is pure. See 1 John 3. 3. But when we look for that return of praise, which all these great blessings should produce; when we look for it to be shewn forth, not with the lips but in the life; when we look at our own lives; when we look therein for holiness, for devotion, for charity, for a heavenly mind; again we must ask in sorrow, "Where are the nine?"

The house of God is opened for his worship. Even on the sabbath day, how large is the proportion of those that stay away! How many come too late for the beginning of the service! How few attend on other days, if on other days the privilege be afforded them, to meet for prayer and praise! And above all other ordinances, in the sacrament of our Lord's most blessed body and blood, an ordinance which He has enjoined on all, a thing which He has bidden all to do, in remembrance of Himself, how is this sad question forced upon our thoughts, "Where are the nine?" They are engaged in the world. They have been indulging the flesh. They have been fulfilling the lusts of the devil. They are estranged, by their own act and deed, from the communion of their Lord and Saviour. They call loudly for his help in the time of their necessity; but in the hour that is set apart for the celebration of his mercy, and in the things which they are concerned to do for his honour, in these they are not found to give God the glory.

Whilst the nine, who had received like healing from our Lord, were thus found insensible to his goodness, let us now see who it was that fell on his face at the feet of his Deliverer, giving Him thanks. "He was a Samaritan," a stranger to the privileges of the Jews; one whom they rejected and despised. Let the honest, the sober, the diligent take warning! How often do they trust in themselves that they are righteous! How often do they neglect to give God the glory! Whilst there are many who have strayed further from his ways, but are more deeply touched by the tidings of his mercy. Instead therefore of despising others, let us consider of ourselves how we have all been estranged from God, and He has brought us nigh unto Himself: how foul have been our many sins, and how great his love to cleanse. Let us consider of our neighbours how many times they may be thankful, when we least suppose it; how high they may stand with God, whilst they seem in our eyes most low. And above all, let us in any case be thankful ourselves; where we have obeyed, thankful for the grace whereby we stand; where we have sinned, thankful for the mercy whereby we are assured of pardon; in affliction thankful for our chastisement; in prosperity for our joy; in poverty, for being safe from the snares of wealth; in riches, for having the greater means to do good; in life, for the continuance of our day of grace; in death, for our entrance into endless glory!

Christ teacheth of the kingdom of God.

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not || with observation :

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is † within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

23 ¹ And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*.

24 For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25 But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation.

26 ² And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 ³ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot;

|| Or, with outward show. † Or, among you.

⁴ Matt. 16. 25

⁵ Matt. 24. 40.

¹ Matt. 24. 23.

² Gen. 7.

³ Gen. 10.

⁴ Gen. 19. 26.

⁵ Matt. 24. 28

† This 36th verse is wanting in most of the Greek copies.

§ 244. *How to behave when the Son of man is revealed.*

“The kingdom of God” is an expression often used by our Saviour. The Pharisees supposed it to mean some great revolution in their own government, by which Jehovah should become visibly their king. Under this impression they anxiously inquired when it should come. Jesus explains his meaning by telling them, “the kingdom of God is within you.” The great change which He has first to work, is the conversion of the hearts of his people. It is that God may therein reign, and the world no longer; that his will may be acknowledged for supreme, and the will of man no more oppose it. This is the true kingdom of God first to be established, this the revolution first to take place within, ere we shall see with joy the great change, of new heavens and a new earth, at the second coming of Christ.

Of the kingdom of heaven, in this latter sense, we are not now to reckon with any certainty as to when it will take place. Come when it will, it will come suddenly, it will come when we are apt to reckon that it will not. It will come as the lightning, which flashes in one moment over the sky; from which no screen can hide us, and which darkness only makes more bright. “So shall also the Son of man be in his day.” Though the kingdom of heaven is for the present within us, it will hereafter be without us also. A great change will take place in all that we see around us. It will arrive suddenly, when mankind as little look for it, as for the fire on Sodom, or for the flood in the times of Noah. It will come when all things are going on just as they are now; and when we shall have no more warning from without to look for it, than we can at this moment discern. Eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, these are the very things that will take place up to the moment when Christ shall come. These are the things now daily happening. Let us then daily now expect the coming of our Lord. In these things let us engage as we should do if we daily expected Him. Already He is revealed to our faith. Hereafter He is to be revealed to our sense. Let us note how, when at length He shall arrive, we are here instructed to behave.

First, we are not to be careful at that moment, and therefore we ought not to be over careful now, about any worldly property we may possess, about any worldly business we may have in hand. We must be warned by the example of Lot's wife, not so much as to look back on this world's goods, but counting all things as loss for Christ, to flee through Him for refuge to the mercy of God. For the more we think, either at such a juncture, or even now, of preserving this present life, the more we run risk to lose both it and that which is to come. Whilst the more freely we renounce all, for God's sake, we shall the more surely both preserve what we have, and gain more than we can conceive. And secondly, we must never consider ourselves prepared for that great day, merely because we seem to be as good as our neighbours. Many will be the instances of persons, to all outward appearance in the same condition, of whom nevertheless the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Not in those only who are in the same worldly employment, grinding at the same mill, labouring in the same field, but in those also whom men reckon in the same degree of spiritual proficiency, God sees such a difference in their hearts, that whilst the one is left to perish everlastingly, the other will be taken, through the merits of Christ, to inherit eternal glory.

they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed:

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the house top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 ⁴ Remember Lot's wife.

33 ⁵ Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 ⁶ I tell you in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left.

35 Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left.

36 † Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37 And they answered and said unto him, ⁷ Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever, the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

The unjust judge.

1 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought 'always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will

avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

1 Thess. 5. 17.

§ 245. *That men ought always to pray.*

This parable has its key hanging at the very door, namely, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And to enforce this duty, our Lord tells of an unjust judge, how he for a time refused to do justice to a forlorn suitor, but was overcome by her perseverance in asking him: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." And these are the words, which Christ bids us hear, to which He would have us diligently attend. And the conclusion He would have us draw is this: if man, sinful man, can be by long crying prevailed on, even against his will, much more will God hear our steadfast prayers, seeing that He rejoices to grant them.

Is there then in any one a reluctance to pray? Do you kneel down without a lively interest in the things you ask for? Is it a burden thus to kneel, and a relief to rise up to your ordinary work? "Hear what the unjust judge saith." And consider how great those blessings are which God offers to your fervent prayers, and how sure you may hence feel that your prayers are not offered in vain. Or do you reason that God is afar off, and cares not to hear the wishes of his creatures? "Hear what the unjust judge saith." And be hence assured, that the righteous Judge of all the earth will much more redress the wrongs, and relieve the wants of all them that call upon Him. Or is it that your thoughts wander whilst you pray? Convinced though you are that God attends, are you unable to command your own attention, unable to restrain your roving thoughts from the business or the pleasures of the world? "Hear what the unjust judge saith." And remember, that it was said to a suitor who prayed, not only often, but earnestly; not only with the lips, but with the heart. Or is it that you have prayed long and earnestly, and have hitherto prayed utterly in vain? Are you tempted by failure to despond? By despondency are you tempted to leave off praying? "Hear what the unjust judge saith." And know, that if you ask, it shall at length be given you; if you seek, you shall at length be sure to find; if you knock, it shall without fail be opened unto you. See Matt. 7. 7.

The prayer of the widow was, "Avenge me of mine adversary." Do justice between me and one who is oppressing me. And thus our Lord also speaks of God as avenging his own elect, doing justice between them and the wicked, between those who love Him and those who hate his commandments. Here their lot seems in many things ill proportioned to their respective dispositions. The wicked prosper; the righteous are afflicted. But He that hears our prayers, shall hereafter set these things right, shall justify before the assembled world his dealings to mankind. This then should be one great object of our prayer even that God's kingdom come. For this we should cry day and night, if we would be counted for God's elect. Nor shall we fail to do so, if only we have faith. If only we believe heartily in Christ, and, through Him, in a blessed immortality; there is no object we could more earnestly desire, none for which we should be more continually inclined to make known our petitions unto God.

And therefore when our Lord exhorts us thus to pray, and not to faint, He asks, at the conclusion of the parable, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" If He were to come now, would He find it in us? Would He find in us a lively, practical conviction, that the end of this life is the beginning of a better? Would He find in us such faith as makes us long to be with Christ where He is? as makes us pray in earnest that his kingdom come? This is a question which each of us must answer for himself; and it is one of which each must soon give an account before God. Let us remember, for our comfort, that as faith is needful for our rightly praying, so praying is helpful to our effectual believing. Let us pray then with perseverance. Let us pray that we may believe, and that God may help our unbelief. Let us pray with the assurance that He is more willing to hear than we to pray; that, although He bear with us, and keep us waiting, what we reckon a long time, yet speedily, as God reckons speed, speedily, as He knows to be for their good, He will avenge his own elect.

Lord, avenge us of our adversary, of him that seeks the destruction of our souls! But, Lord, if there be any who bear ill will to us on earth, we pray Thee, turn their hearts; we pray Thee, as we hope to be forgiven ourselves, Lord, forgive our enemies!

The Pharisee and the Publican.

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves || that they were righteous, and despised others :

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray ; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a

sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other : 'for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them : but when *his* disciples saw *it* they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

|| Or, *as being righteous*.

1 Matt. 23. 12.

§ 246. *Humility in things spiritual.*

Here we have humility most forcibly recommended, both by an affecting parable and by a significant action. In the parable our Lord has so described the pride of the Pharisee, that it cannot fail to be odious in our sight. Whilst the lowly contrition of the publican is made to be as amiable before men, as it is declared to be acceptable unto God. And this is common with the divine Teacher in matters which He most wishes to enforce. He would convince us out of our own feelings. He would condemn us out of our own mouths. How hateful must we ever henceforth own it to be in ourselves, to trust that we are righteous, and despise others ! How plain, that, whether in our worship, or in our ordinary thoughts, it is only when we are sensible of our sinfulness that we can be justified through Christ, in the sight of God !

And, observe, it is against spiritual pride, it is of humility in things spiritual, that our Lord here chiefly speaks. It is the estimate we form of our condition in God's sight, as his servants, of the service we render Him, of our worthiness or unworthiness, it is of this that we might derive from this parable a correct impression. The Pharisee in this instance stands excused of ostentation before men. He prayed indeed proudly ; but "he prayed thus with himself." Only also with himself there was God whom he addressed ; God, whose divine majesty he profaned, by thus dwelling on his own good deeds. It is not enough then that in man's presence we abase ourselves. It is not enough that we are ready to take the lowest place in the company we keep, among the friends we honour. This we may do outwardly ; whilst yet it is seen by Him who seeth in secret, that we esteem ourselves among the highest in his sight.

Let us examine then, are there none whom, in our secret thoughts, we set down for extortioners, unjust, adulterers, with much such presumption on our own superiority, as was felt by the Pharisee in the parable before us ? Do we never, in taking account of our spiritual condition, reckon up with complacency the good which we have done, instead of dwelling on our manifold infirmities, and flying unto the refuge of God's mercy for the forgiveness of our countless sins ? Do we never conceive ourselves to be excused, as by some special favour, in the things which in others we condemn ; never hope to escape, by some signal providence, the judgments which for others we profess to apprehend ? If we do, there can be no doubt which of the parties in this parable we most closely resemble ; there can be no question which sentence we deserve. We cannot deny that we are exalting ourselves. We cannot expect but that in the end we must be abased.

To be exalted of God, we must humble ourselves, where He sees in the heart. We must feel both how deficient we are in his sight, and how inferior, according to his reckoning, inferior in many points of Christian duty, to those who enjoy no better light than we do. We must thank God for others that they are faithful and obedient, for ourselves that we are not cut off in our impenitence. We must receive, in short, the kingdom of God as little children ; as having no more merit of our own to plead, than new born babes, who have done neither good nor evil. This must be the feeling with which we enter on a course of Christian life. This the view we are bound to take of our past years, though we have spent them faithfully in the service of our Lord. The testimony of conscience, the conviction that we have so served and so believed, this is indeed the best proof which we can have, that we have been born of God, have been led by the Spirit, and have henceforth a crown of glory laid up for us in heaven. But a holy life, though it be the only sure sign of faith, and therefore the only safe ground of hope, is no meritorious cause of salvation. It is not the thing we are to trust in. He that should do all, would be still but an unprofitable servant. And they who have done most must be most careful to remember that they have no claim of right ; must receive the kingdom of God as little children, or they will in no wise enter therein.

God be merciful to us, miserable offenders ! To our many faulty and wicked works, God be merciful ! To our many idle and wanton words, God be merciful ! To our many vain and evil thoughts, God be merciful ! For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord !

Christ answereth the ruler touching the way of life.

18 ¹ And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, *that is*, God.

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter

into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

²28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

¹ Matt. 19. 16.

² Matt. 19. 27.

§ 247. *How much for Christ we must do, and through Him we may.*

The question of this ruler is one which we ought daily to be putting to our Lord, as we study his revealed word. "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The answer we may interpret as follows. "Why callest thou me good?" Is it as believing me to be that one only Being to whom this name belongs? If so, follow up thy profession by corresponding practice. Fulfil those commandments which thou knowest to come of God. Take those which thou knowest in the Old Testament. Obey them, not in the letter only, but in the spirit, devoting thyself and thy whole substance to the service of Christ. And begin, by way of trial, with this rule, which I lay down for my disciples: "sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Such was the course marked out for this enquirer, as the best he could pursue towards eternal life. Such therefore must be the spirit of our minds, in our progress towards the same great end.

"And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich." See how near these two things sorrow and riches are to each other! The last what we so greatly covet! The first what we so diligently avoid! Yet the ruler being rich, might have been glad to think he had at his disposal the means required. The more he was rich, the more he should have rejoiced to become poor for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Such is the joy we should feel on gaining information, however much it may cost us to abide by it, if we ask out of a real desire to know the way of eternal life! such is the pleasure which this world's goods should afford to the true disciple, that he may so use them as to be laying up treasure in heaven. This however is not the way in which we view these things by nature. But rather, the more we have, we desire to obtain more, to spend more on ourselves, to enjoy more of worldly satisfaction. And hence it is so difficult for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God.

And this our Lord goes on to represent as being not only hard, but actually impossible; as a thing that is no more to be attained, than for a camel to go through a needle's eye. And so He would have us feel in all cases, whether of wealth or poverty, that to be saved is altogether out of the power of man. And when thus we once duly feel, then would He assure us, for our comfort, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." And of this we have signal instances in the miracles our Lord wrought whilst He was on earth in the flesh. From which we should do well always to conclude that, in like manner as He could give health to the diseased, He can impart holiness to the soul; and that as He raised the dead to life, so He can fit us by his grace to live for ever.

Thus it was that Peter and the other apostles were enabled, through God's assistance, to leave all, and follow Christ. Thus may any one of us have grace, if only we duly seek it, to leave "house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake." Not that we are often required, in our present circumstances, to relinquish, on a Christian principle, the society of our nearest relations. On the contrary it is usually one of our first duties to live with them on terms of affection and respect. And yet we must be prepared to give them up, if necessary. We must be in that frame of mind which would have made us give them up, in the times when there was no choice but so to do, or to renounce the profession of the Christian faith. And for this, we must now not so love our dearest friends, as that for their sake we would less love God. We must not so love them, as that, to gratify their wishes, we would do any single thing which we suspect to be wrong, or leave undone any single thing which we know to be right. We must not so love them, as not to love, far more than them, that Lord who has vouchsafed to call us "friends," John 15. 14, who is described as "the first born among many brethren," Rom. 8. 29, and as the Spouse of his spouse the church. See Ephes. 5. 23.

Christ foresheweth his death ; healeth a blind man.

31 ¹ Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on :

33 And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death : and the third day he shall rise again.

34 And they understood none of these things : and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

35 ² And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging :

36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace : but he cried so much the more, *Thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him : and when he was come near, he asked him,

41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight : thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God : and all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise unto God.

Matt. 20. 17.

² Matt. 20. 29.

§ 248. *The progress of spiritual sight.*

How forward is our Lord to speak to his disciples of the things which He should suffer at Jerusalem ! How welcome unto Him was the fulfilment of this his Father's will ! How cheerfully ought we too to look forward to the change we must undergo in death ; nay, to the sufferings which we shall probably then endure ! Are they not our Father's will ? Is not this the way in which it seemed good to Him to make perfect the Captain of our salvation ? See Heb. 2. 10. And shall we not rejoice to think, whensoever our time shall come, that we are going where He has gone before, and by the same way He went ? Thus then let us think, thus speak of death ; as knowing that we also shall rise again. And though the world understand not our saying, we shall have spoken what it is profitable for the world to hear.

In the miracle which follows, we must first adore the divine power of Him who could make the blind to see. We may next apply it to our own spiritual infirmity of sight, and hence learn by what means it may be effectually removed. First, we must be sensible of our defect. We must be aware, that by nature we cannot see the things that belong to our salvation ; that we cannot, by any faculty of our own, discern God's power and providence and love, the way of life He offers, or how we may walk therein. Next we must be content to apply for our instruction to those who are authorized to give it. This blind man consulted such as could see, asking what the passing by of Jesus meant. We too must be apt to learn. We must be humble and patient in attending to the teaching of those whom we may well allow to know far better than ourselves.

But further, even where we cannot clearly understand, it is our duty unfeignedly to believe ; to believe in God's goodness and ability to order all things for the best, whether we can know how, or not. For this blind man persisted in applying unto Christ, though he could not himself see Him, and was forbidden by those who could. And his blindness must have rendered him unable to understand how Christ could make him see, or even what sight truly meant. Yet he was clearly aware that Christ could convey to him a great blessing, could relieve him of a grievous defect ; in a word, could "have mercy" on him. And this he understood well enough for him to believe heartily, and to pray effectually. Thus we also, before we have tasted by experience may believe in the power of God's grace, in the influence of his Spirit on our souls, and on our redemption unto life through Christ. These things we may understand enough of beforehand for us to believe in them heartily, to pray for them fervently, to attain unto them thankfully.

Lastly, when we have attained them, and in proportion as we have attained, we must do as did this blind man, who upon receiving his sight, followed Christ, glorifying God. Our sense of deficiency, our readiness to learn, our understanding, our faith, must all end in this one thing, a zeal to obey. The end of our calling, as far as this life is concerned, is to walk in the steps of Christ's example ourselves, and make others when they see us, give praise to God. Thus will our faith save us ; if at the present it deliver us from sin, we shall in the end be delivered from eternal death. Thus will our faith be not dead, but living ; if it bring forth the fruit of a holy life. And thus, however faintly we may see at first, we shall by degrees be fitted to behold the glory of God most High.

Grant, Lord, that in our life, and in our death, we may both glorify, and make others to glorify, thy holy name ! Grant us to see now, in thy Gospel, what eye hath not seen ; and hereafter to enjoy, in thy blessed kingdom, what no imagination of man's heart hath conceived. See 1 Cor. 2. 9.

Christ converteth Zacchæus.

1 And *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, *there was* a man named *Zacchæus*, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see *Jesus* who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when *Jesus* came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, *Zacchæus*, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And *Zacchæus* stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.

9 And *Jesus* said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 ¹ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

¹ Matt. 18. 11.

§ 249. *Almsgiving and restitution.*

That *Zacchæus* was little in stature may signify to us how slight is the importance of outward advantages, compared with the disposition of the inner man. What he wanted in height he could make up for by activity in climbing up the tree. There he could both see, and be seen of *Jesus*. And thence he was invited to come down, and to receive the Lord into his house. However great be our hindrances by defect of nature, or default of education, whether we be weakly in body or in mind, let us never imagine that this is any reason for us to come short of the love of Christ. There is always some tree which we may by faith ascend, some eminence of holiness, in thought, or word, or deed, which will make us both better to see Him, and to be the better by Him regarded. The less we have attained, let us learn the more to strive. And the shorter is our measure of talents or of gifts, the more let us exert what strength we have, that we may behold the glory of God.

But *Zacchæus* laboured under other and greater disadvantages. He "was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich." The mention of these circumstances is most seasonable, after the difficulty so lately insisted on, "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." 18. 25. Here we find how "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." 18. 27. Here we see how "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." He encourages the zeal of this chief of publicans, by proposing the same day to abide at his house. And in the resolution which *Zacchæus* immediately declared, we have ample proof that our Lord, when there, converted the heart of his host. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." I devote them to be so given, from this day forth. I put not off till to-morrow the giving of them. I give them now. In the presence of this company, and before Thee, I part with the half of all that I possess, for the benefit of my poorer brethren. "And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." I am not ashamed to own my sins. I am willing to redress the wrongs I have inflicted. This profession of *Zacchæus* is not the account of what his life had been, but the resolution of what by God's grace it should be. It is not the empty boast of the past, or the vain intention for the future, but the action of the hour then present, the expression of his repentance and amendment of life, through faith in *Jesus Christ*. And therefore is he assured by our Lord, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham;" that is to say, a son of his faith.

Let us then note for our improvement the two chief things of this holy resolution. He gives to the poor the half of his goods. Here is a proportion no less striking, for the imitation of the rich, than is the widow's mite for the encouragement of the poor. When we are called upon to give and are in doubt as to the amount we should contribute, let us think of the proportion here offered by *Zacchæus*. It may kindle our zeal, to give more than we otherwise should. It will convince us of sin, in a disposition to give less. And though it should not constrain us to give the half of our goods, it must teach us to make a conscience of how we spend the whole. Next, where he had done wrong, he restores fourfold. It were well if we were careful to restore but once. It were well if we could always bear in mind that what we have received wrongfully of any other, is not ours, but his. And as long as we neither give it him, nor so much as own that we have taken it, we may be sorry for having done so, but we have not repented. For why is it that we are averse to restore? Either we are unwilling to confess our faults; and then how can we be humble? or else we are reluctant to part with our unjust gains; and if so, how are we just? And how, if either we lack humility, or are wanting in a resolution to be just, how can we be counted for repentant?

Lord, help us to give largely of that which is our own! And that which is not ours teach us to restore! Seek, Lord, in us that which is gone astray! Save that which was lost! And that which Thou hast found, preserve!

The parable of the nobleman and the ten pounds.

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 ¹ He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten \parallel pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant, Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, ² That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

¹ Matt. 25. 14.

\parallel *Mina*, here translated a pound, is twelve ounces and a half: which according to five shillings the ounce is three pounds two shillings and sixpence.

² Matt. 13. 12.

§ 250. *That God's ways are not our ways.*

The disciples who attended on our Lord were apt to think that He would establish in Jerusalem a new and divine kingdom. In these thoughts they were the more inclined to indulge as He drew nigh to the holy city. He spake therefore now this parable, on purpose to shew them that his kingdom was "not of this world," John 18. 36; that it was not here that they should share his reign; but that they must wait, and work with patience till the time of his return from heaven. He was to go, He is now gone, as into a far country, there "to receive for himself," and for us, "a kingdom;" and thence, at the end of all things, "to return." Our condition in the meantime is far from being what the disciples expected, a condition of ease and prosperity under the manifest favour of Christ reigning upon earth. It is a state like that of servants in the absence of their lord, entrusted with a sum to improve, a business of importance to transact. It is a state of trial, of labour, of risk. The less therefore we reckon on God's special favour in this world's concerns, the more entirely we refer all that we receive, and all we do, to the account we shall have to give in the world which is to come; so much the better shall we fulfil the great lesson which is in this parable set forth.

We have each of us some one pound to employ to our Master's honour. Ten we gain with it, or five, or none, according to our diligence in his service, or our sloth. Let us observe that to gain none, is itself a sin. Not only is there wrath denounced against those enemies who will not have Christ reign over them. Not only to do much wilful evil, but to do no good, not to purpose, not to try to do any, this will draw on us the sentence of the "wicked servant:" "Take from him the pound, and give to him that hath ten pounds." In vain should we complain, by way of justifying ourselves, that this is harsh treatment, and that the Lord, who thus uses us, is an austere master. If we could indeed suppose that He were so, this would be but the more urgent reason for us to comply with his demands. As we cannot help having to answer unto Him, this should but the more powerfully constrain us to "flee from the wrath to come," Matt. 3. 7. In vain too should we plead, after the manner of worldly wisdom, "Lord, he hath ten pounds;" as grudging the reward of diligence, whilst we murmur at the chastisement of sloth. God's ways are not our ways. And it is his rule of justice, that "unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." Already do we find this to be the case in those gifts of grace within the soul, which are from time to time enlarged, the more we profit by them; and which, the less we grow in them, are the less freely imparted. The same principle will be hereafter applied in the allotting of our everlasting reward. In proportion to the grace we have attained will be the measure of the joy we shall receive. And to those who have attained none, to those who have wasted their opportunities, and made no improvement by their privileges, there will be no joy, but only condemnation.

Reign, Lord, we pray Thee, over us; be Thou our Guide and Ruler, until death! Much Thou hast already given us, we own with thanks. Oh continue, as Thou art wont, to give us more and more!

Christ rideth into Jerusalem in triumph.

28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

29 ¹ And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast

their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as they went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

¹ Matt. 21. 1.

§ 251. *How we must fulfil the will of Christ.*

The last words of this passage may greatly help to explain the meaning of the whole transaction. It was a public testimony to Jesus as the Messiah, forced by a miracle from the multitude, whilst they were ignorant of his real kingdom. The disciples indeed cried, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." But their joy was only for "the mighty works that they had seen." They had as yet no notion of the great end of our Lord's coming, of the great blessing He was to bring upon the world. They proclaimed "peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." But they were all the while expecting Him to assume a visible throne on earth. They knew nothing or but little of that peace between God and man, which Christ was to establish by the shedding of his blood; of that glory in the highest, which was to arise not from his throne but from his cross. The words therefore which they uttered were overruled by that Almighty Power which could with equal ease have made the stones "immediately cry out." He it is who must also move our stony hearts to praise our Lord and Saviour. Not by our own strength can we offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and prayer. Not without God can we feel what to God we owe, can we give what to God is due.

For this solemn occasion the disciples were prepared by a manifestation of divine foreknowledge in Christ, as to the very manner in which they should obtain a colt for Him to ride on. And to this was added a miraculous interference, operating on the disposition of the owners, and inclining them to grant the request preferred. "The Lord hath need of him," was an answer which could else by no means have satisfied them, which they could not else so much as have understood. We have the privilege of knowing who is meant by "the Lord." We have the advantage of being instructed as to what it is He needs. Let us be aware that for us to fulfil his will there must be exercised in our hearts the same heavenly influence. Let us reflect also that Christ in like manner knows of us beforehand, in case we shall obey his commandments. Let our conviction of his divine foreknowledge, and our trust in his sufficient grace, make this same reason ever conclusive with us: "The Lord hath need of him." Whether it be our property He requires us to bestow, our passions to deny, or our friends to resign to the grave; whether it be to give, or to forgive, to lend, to lose, or to refrain from enjoying what we possess, it must be enough for us to know the will of Christ; we must feel no hesitation in complying.

Thus might we best prepare for entering with Christ into the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus might we there share his glory, there receive the crown which through his gift is ours. Meantime, whilst on our road to that goodly city, let us take our lesson from the conduct of the multitude here described. Let us, by faith and holiness, devote to our Lord's service all that we have, all that we are. Let us with our lips and by our lives confess Him before men, that He may confess us before our Father which is in heaven. Not like the stones which feel not, not like the disciples who understood not, but with heart and mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, let us declare in the fulness of our conviction, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

We praise Thee, Lord, for all the mighty works which Thou hast done; for the peace which Thou hast made for us in heaven; for the glory which Thou hast prepared for us in the highest! Come, Lord, we pray Thee, come speedily in the glory of thy kingdom! Come "in the name of the Lord," come in the majesty of power, come in the robe of mercy; come as Isaiah prophesied, "the Prince of peace." Isa. 9. 6. Come as the angel has interpreted thy name, "to save thy people from their sins." Matt. 1. 21.

Christ cometh to Jerusalem.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest

not the time of thy visitation.

45 ¹ And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,

48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people || were very attentive to hear him.

¹ Matt. 21. 12.

|| Or, *hanged on him.*

§ 252. *Justice and mercy.*

Here we see both the justice and the mercifulness, “the goodness and severity of God.” Rom. 11. 22. Here we see Christ pitying those whom He so soon must punish, and casting out in wrath those whom He had so lately pitied. We are apt, in our weak apprehension, to confound these two great features in the dealings of the Almighty. We are tempted often so to trust in his mercy, as on the strength of it to continue in sin. Against this error let us take warning from the behaviour of our Lord here set down. Do we doubt his affectionate concern for Jerusalem? Let us then observe his tears, let us hear his words of bitter regret: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!” Such are the tears our Saviour sheds for souls that perish! Such are the words He utters in our behalf, whilst we yet might perish not! Such is his tender love, his anxious desire to save, his concern for them that are lost!

But will He therefore forbear to punish? Did He forbear to punish Jerusalem? No, surely; the days did come upon that city when their enemies laid it even with the ground. Shall it be said that this was the work of man; and that, though man may destroy, Christ can only save? Nay we know that this destruction of Jerusalem is spoken of in Scripture as the visitation of Christ Himself. We know that it signifies with what certainty He will come in like manner, at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead. Then will He again enter into his temple; then purify his church, now many times polluted by sin. For what are Christians in this world but one temple of God; see 1 Cor. 3. 16; one house, which ought to be a “house of prayer?” If, instead of knowing the time of their visitation, they waste it in pleasurable sin; if, instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, they set their hearts on the comforts of the world; if they rob God of his honour, and defraud the Lord who bought them of their reasonable service; must they not take to themselves this description of the Jewish temple, “ye have made it a den of thieves?” Let not such men hope to escape through God’s great mercy, and through Christ’s great merits. It is by reason of those very merits, and of that very mercy, that He will assuredly cast them out. His goodness abused is the utmost aggravation of their sin. His having left the glory of the Father, taken on Him our flesh, and died for our sakes upon the cross, these are the things which above all others, render us inexcusable in our iniquity. We can no longer plead our weakness, when through Christ we might now have strength, when through Him we might have access to the Father, and grace to help in time of need. We need no longer feel the future hopeless, because of the burden of the past; when through Christ we may enjoy the assurance, that the past is all forgiven, that our sins are blotted out from the remembrance of God.

Let none then be led by hope of mercy, to continue in transgression. Least of all let any attempt to gainsay the truth which condemns themselves; to scoff at God’s word, or to make light of the excellency of their Saviour’s love. Unbelievers, like the scribes and Pharisees, seem often to be bent upon destroying Christ. But, like them, they cannot find what they might do. And the obstacle is in some sort still the same, that all the people are “very attentive to hear him.” The confidence which has been entertained by so great a multitude of mankind in the truth of Christianity, the minute attention that has been bestowed upon its history and proofs, render vain all attempts to subvert it. No one thing which we can know, is more certain than that Jesus is the Son of God; that in the Gospel the will of God is revealed. By that Gospel we shall be judged in the last day. Not according to our notions of goodness shall we be tried; but according to that goodness, which, whilst it pities the sinner, is for ever at enmity with sin.

Christ maintaineth his authority.

1 And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders,

2 And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:

4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

1 Matt. 21 23.

§ 253. *The misery of unbelief.*

The Jewish rulers, having first resolved against belief, next demand of our Lord his authority. Thus they also, who set at nought Christ's ministers, are apt to question the validity of their office. "By what authority doest thou these things?" this is the secret murmur of the sinner who has been faithfully rebuked; this is the open objection of those who gainsay the ministry of the church. Such persons, in order to justify themselves, feel continually urged to prove in error those from whom they separate. And it is this circumstance, we may hope, rather than hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, which accounts for the bitterness that is apt to prevail between members of different communions. Let us resolve neither to revile those from whom we feel compelled to differ, nor to hate, though they revile us, those who differ from ourselves. And let us direct our anxiety, not so much to the making out others to be wrong, as to the ascertaining that we ourselves are right.

And for this end let us here put to our own hearts the question with which our Lord perplexed the chief priests and scribes and elders. Let us see whether it would not perplex ourselves, if it were put in some such form as this following. The Gospel of Christ, was it from heaven, or of men? However little we live as if it were from heaven, we dare not say, Of men. For "all the people," all our friends and neighbours and acquaintances, all the people amongst whom we live, are persuaded that He was even more than a prophet, and would hate though not stone us, for avowed infidelity. Many thus profess to be Christians merely because to be otherwise is a thing contemptible; because it argues a conceit of being wiser than the rest of mankind, and an ignorance of what all the rest of mankind well know. Not because they know any thing of the words or works of Christ, not because they care in any thing to serve Him, or hope in any thing to profit by his redemption, not on the grounds of real conviction are these Christians firm in their profession; but rather because the Gospel is the religion of the land, the religion which all around them acknowledge to be true.

And now to Christians such as these, if this question were put concerning the Gospel of Christ, Whence was it? Dare they say "From heaven?" Nay, dare any of us say "From heaven," without risk of the severe expostulation, "Why then believed ye him not?" Is believing to call one hour on the name of Christ, and the next to deceive, to flatter, to slander our fellow creatures? Is believing no more, than that morning and evening, we should cry, Lord, Lord, and all the rest of the day set at nought the will of our Father which is in heaven? Is it to indulge the flesh in every pleasure we have a mind to? Is it to seek after the enjoyments of the world, no matter at what risk to the saving of the soul? Is it to have our thoughts, our lives, our conversation, engrossed with the things seen, which are temporal; and neither to meditate on, nor hope for, nor so much as to desire, the things which are not seen, which are eternal? If this be to believe, then may we answer without risk of shame, that Christ and his Gospel are from heaven. But if whilst this has been the tenour of our lives, we feel it to be as far from faith as darkness is from light, who must not fear, lest in owning Jesus for the Christ, he expose himself to be reproved by the question, "Why then believed ye him not?"

What a sad consideration must this be to those who believe one way, and live another; or rather, who professing to believe, are in fact destitute of faith! What a miserable condition; that a man dare not so much as own to the faint convictions which he has, lest he only the more aggravate his sinfulness, in the lack of those graces which he has not! Never may we be thus afraid to answer, because thus unwilling to believe! Never may we be thus ashamed to confess to what we know, because it so ill agrees with what we do! Yet is not this the real reason why we so seldom speak as if the Gospel did indeed come from heaven? Is not this the reason why our lips are so seldom found to utter "that which is good to the use of edifying?" Eph. 4. 29. How else could it be that Christ has died in our behalf, and we never discourse of his sufferings or death? How, that for us He obtained the gifts of grace, and opened the gates of heaven, and that we never commune with each other of his love? How; if it be not, that when we would express the thoughts of how good He has been, we are silenced by the secret consciousness of how wicked we are ourselves!

The parable of the vineyard.

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; ¹A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir:

come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our's.

15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, ²The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

¹ Matt. 21. 33.

² Psal. 118. 22.

§ 254. *That we must beware of rejecting Christ.*

The Jews readily understood that this parable was directed against themselves. Their nation was the vineyard planted by the Almighty. Their prophets were the servants whom He had commissioned to receive the appointed fruits, obedience and holiness in his people. When they had cast out these, He at length sent unto them his Son. So much the more intent were the wicked husbandmen to put to death this last Messenger of the covenant. Therefore was their sentence thus fearfully set forth: "He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others." And therefore was it written aforetime: "The stone which the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner." See Psalm 118. 22. It was in these words foretold of the Jews, by their own king, that they would refuse the very stone which was of chief honour in their building, even their own Christ Himself.

The practical use, which we are to make of the punishment here denounced against the Jews, is to consider it as a warning to ourselves. God's vineyard is now given unto us. Of us does He require holiness and love, as the appropriate fruits of faith. To us does He in this parable very plainly threaten, that if we pay not this tribute, He will utterly destroy the husbandmen, and give again this vineyard to others. Shall we be content to say, "God forbid?" Shall we feel affected for one hour with the sense of our being accountable for every thing that we do; and the next, do without compunction all manner of sin? Shall we one while deprecate the pains of hell; and at another altogether forget their existence? Shall we see to day the necessity of caring for the soul, and tomorrow care only, or chiefly, for the comforts of the body? This would be like the Jews saying, "God forbid," whilst they continued to provoke his judgments; praying that He would not visit them in wrath, and yet seeking, as in the very next verse we read, "the same hour," to lay hands on his blessed Son.

It is not enough to say "God forbid;" unless we act so as for Him to withhold his arm from punishment. It is not enough to pray that his kingdom come; if we put it away from us in our thoughts and in our lives. He judges of our real wishes not by what we say, but by what we do; not only by what we do, but by what He sees we wish. These inward desires, these movements of the affection of the heart, these are our real prayers. And many times, it is to be feared, whilst outwardly we bow the knee to Christ, and with our tongues say, God forbid that we deny Him, our hearts do all the time, with stronger utterance proclaim, "Come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our's." This is, if we would put Christ out of our thoughts, in order to enjoy the world as though it were our own. This is, if we would put out of our sight the duty we here owe to Him; that so we may follow only our own will, or go freely with the multitude to do evil. If we do so, and in proportion as we do so, we are rejecting that stone which is the head of the corner. We are stumbling at it, so as to fall to our destruction; so as that it will fall on us, and grind us to powder. Let us see then that above all we reverence the Son. Let us take heed that in all things we are glad to act as in his presence. Let us be thankful to the Father for having sent Him; to the Son for having come. Let us be careful to obey all the words that He has spoken. Let us be watchful to avoid all the sins He has denounced. Let us pray against sin, that we do it not, as well as against punishment, that we suffer it not; "God forbid!" God forbid that we should any longer love that which is evil! God not only forbid, but by his grace prevent! God bar against us the path of evil; stay us in our career of sin; make us to love that which He commands, and to hate that which He forbids!

Christ answereth the spies.

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

21 And they asked him, saying, 'Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God || truly:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

1 Matt. 22. 16.

|| Or, of a truth.

† See Matt. 18. 28.

§ 255. *The end of worldly cunning.*

We see here the common end of worldly cunning. These spies, who were sent on purpose to entrap our Saviour, are caught in their own snare; "in the same net which they hid privily, is their foot taken." Ps. 9. 15. The Jews had been many times, for their sins, made subject to a foreign yoke. They were now under the dominion of the Romans. And this circumstance was taken by the spies for the foundation of their captions question. They so framed their inquiry, as that it seemed to admit of no safe answer from our Lord. And their object all the while was, not to learn what they inquired, but to "deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor." They said one thing and meant another. They praised Him for teaching "the way of God truly," whilst they aimed to betray Him into the hand of man. They went to Him buying peace on their lips, but war in their hearts. Their words were "smoother than oil," and yet were they "very swords." Ps. 55. 22.

This then was the craftiness which Christ perceived in the spies. And now mark how ill they succeeded. "They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answer, and they held their peace." Such is the common end of worldly cunning. It fails of its own object. It exposes those who practise it to disgrace. Whatever therefore you undertake, act openly, honestly. Go straight forward to what you aim at. Lay no snares for others, lest you be entangled in them yourselves. If you have a complaint to make, make it plainly; if a fault to find, do it without reserve. State your grievance; and if needful, assign your reason. Avow your object; and be ready on due occasions, to declare your motives. If you are afraid or ashamed to do this, there is probably something in them that there ought not to be. Either you are selfish in what you aim at; or at least you are not sure that you are charitable. You are indulging your own evil passions; or at least you are not working for your brother's good. There is nothing that you can have to do to him, out of true Christian love, which you might not better do openly, if painful, than by stealth. There is nothing you can wish to say, out of concern for his improvement, which you may not better say directly, than indirectly. Approach him not with fair words and a foul design; approach not with words of any kind different from your intent; lest you be acting like these spies, and have your end like theirs.

Christ easily confuted their questions, by the image and superscription of the money about which they inquired. This shewed them that they were wrong, to raise any question at all about the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cæsar. And his words should impress on us our bounden duty, to offer to the government, under which we live, both our tribute and our good will, our allegiance and our prayers. And further they may serve to remind us, that bearing as we do in us, the image and superscription of Christ, we are bound to render unto Him ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a tribute which is his just due. Are we not all called by his name, Christians? The appellations we are known by amongst each other, were not these given us at the time when we were dedicated to his service? Were we not at the first made after the image of God! See Gen. 1. 27. And though afterwards begotten by Adam, after his own image, see Gen. 5. 3, have we not, as Christians, been "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created" us? Col. 3. 10. Have we not been predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God? See Rom. 8. 29. Have we not in us now this blessed assurance, that "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly?" 1 Cor. 15. 49. Thus the image and superscription which we have is Christ's. Let us render then unto Christ the things which are his. Let us render unto Christ ourselves. This is to render unto God the things which be God's; when we render unto God, through Christ, our hearts and souls, our outward conduct, and our inmost motives, our thoughts, our words, our deeds. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is the Judge of all the earth; and He the fount of mercy. He makes war and makes peace; declares Himself to be ever at enmity with sin, and yet at all times ready to be reconciled to sinners, through the mediation of his blessed Son.

Christ refuteth the Sadducees.

27 ¹ Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him,

28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died.

32 Last of all the woman died also.

33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of

them is she? for seven had her to wife.

34 And Jesus answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

37 Now that the dead are raised, ² even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

¹ Matt. 22. 23.

² Exod. 3. 6.

§ 256. *Of heavenly happiness.*

That the happiness of heaven is of a kind far above our comprehension, is rendered probable, by our being told in Scripture what it is not rather than what it is. "There the wicked cease from troubling," Job 3. 17. The poor are there poor no more. See Luke 6. 20. The city, which we shall there inhabit, is one that has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it." Rev. 21. 23. The condition, in which men shall then exist, is one in which "they neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more." It is indeed added, "for they are equal unto the angels." But whilst we know so little of what angels are, this gives us no explicit information. Nor can we learn much more of what the righteous then will be, from their being called "the children of God," and the "children of the resurrection." For of God's ways we know only that they are not as our ways. See Isaiah 55. 8. And of the resurrection, we may still ask in ignorance, though we must never demand in doubt, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" 1 Cor. 15. 35.

St. Paul puts this question into the mouth of an unbeliever, who denied the resurrection of the body, because he could not imagine how it would take place. The Sadducees, on the other hand, took for granted that they knew how it must be, if at all. And as they conceived that they could prove this way to be impossible, they denied the resurrection altogether. Hence we learn the danger, as well as folly, of being wise beyond what is written; of setting up for knowing more of things spiritual than God has revealed in his word. God has not told us of those particulars, in which the glory of the next life will consist. If we determine for ourselves that it will be like our life on earth, we are surrounded by difficulties which no one can explain; and we run the risk of making shipwreck of our faith. If we are content to know nothing beyond what God has taught us, we are in the way to know more, both by the teaching of his Spirit in this present life, and by the actual enjoyment of the life which is to come.

This single consideration shewed the Sadducees, that they had no ground for denying the resurrection of the dead. Our Lord next shews them how, if they had searched the Scriptures, they might have found sufficient ground for believing it. This He argues from Jehovah being therein described, as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Exod. 3. 6. "For he is not," adds our Lord, "the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." They must have been alive therefore, when these words were spoken unto Moses. But they had long ceased to live in this world we live in. They were alive therefore in another world. They were alive in that world, in which we hope to live for ever. There we shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. There we shall meet the spirits of all just men made perfect. There we shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven, with all who are fit to dwell in the presence of the Lord.

How deeply should this great doctrine sink into our hearts! How powerfully should it affect the practice of our lives! We shall rise of a certainty from the dead. We shall rise to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall rise, if only here we die in the Lord, to live with the Lord for ever. What a crown of glory is here set before us! And how faintly do we strive to obtain it! How high and heavenly is our calling! How low our hopes, how feeble our exertions! How spiritual is the life which we ought now to lead, with a view to that which we then might enter! How carnal are our thoughts, both of our present duties, and of our everlasting inheritance! Oh, never may we think of the resurrection of the dead, as of any earthly joys however excellent! Never may we conceive of heavenly love, as of any earthly affections, however pure and fervent! Let us set them, in our imagination, above all that we can now experience; and we shall be likely to desire them with the greater earnestness, and to seek them with the more lively and effectual zeal.

Christ denounceth the scribes.

39 Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.

40 And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

41 And he said unto them, ¹How say they that Christ is David's son?

42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he

then his son?

45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,

46 ²Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;

47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

¹ Matt. 22. 42.

² Matt. 23. 5.

§ 257. *That we must beware of hypocrites.*

When the scribes found that the Sadducees were put to silence, they acknowledged to Jesus, "Master, thou hast well said." We might expect that thereupon they became converts to his doctrine. But far from it; they merely refrained from any further questions. "And after that they durst not ask him any." This we may fear is no very uncommon result of inquiry into Christian truth. Men are convinced in their minds, but their lives, their hearts, remain unchanged. They inquire no further, merely because they dare not: because they feel that each question more deeply convicts them of sin, far not believing unto repentance. But whatsoever truth we take in hand to examine, let us never stop, out of the fear of being convinced by Christ. Let us be prepared to cast away any prejudice, however strong, to leave off any practice, however greatly endeared to us, if we find it on inquiry, inconsistent with his word. Let us never be stayed by the fear of thus losing in his behalf the indulgences we love. But rather wherever we most suspect ourselves to be wrong, there let us the more endeavour to become right.

It is in this spirit that we must receive the doctrine which our Lord here next delivers, a doctrine most unwelcome to human pride, that Christ was at once David's Son and David's Lord; that He was at once both man and God. Here we have a great difficulty presented to our understanding. Here we might be tempted by an unworthy fear to close our hearts against inquiry. But how useful shall we find it to consider, that whilst as man He died in our behalf, as God He was able to atone for our sins! Let us desire therefore to know Him more and more, in both his characters. Was He man? Let us rejoice to think of Him, as One who called us his brethren. Was He God? Let us take Him for our Lord, for the Master of our thoughts and actions. Let us be assured, that if this be the truth of Scripture, it must be profitable for us to know it; and that it must be profitable for our growth in faith and love, in proportion as it is unwelcome to our pride.

In the charges which follow against the scribes, we see the reason of their reluctance to inquire and believe. They were not likely to desire to know the truth, when their hearts were set on the wearing of their robes, and "greetings in the markets," on "the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts." These things they loved out of ostentation; to shew their own consequence, to exalt themselves in the estimation of mankind. And to these they added the devouring of widows' houses, and the making long prayers, for a display of piety. As if it were the length, and not the fervency of prayer, that renders it a sign of devotion in the heart! As if any prayer could fail to aggravate their sins, if they all the while continued deliberately to wrong the most helpless of their fellow creatures.

Beware then of the scribes; not of their sins only, but of themselves! "Beware of the scribes." Beware of such as do what the scribes did! Beware of such as give their thoughts to dress! Beware of such as court the favour of the world, or delight in the world's distinctions! Beware of such as cover wicked actions by a fair outside, wrong those who are least able to right themselves, and pray, not in order to be, but to be thought, devout! Beware of them for they are dangerous to their friends and neighbours. Beware; for you are else not safe, either from their ill conduct, or from their ill example. Beware; for remember how awful is their sentence: "the same shall receive the greater damnation." The longer their prayers, their sin is so much the greater, and their condemnation so much the more severe. They offend the more against light and knowledge: they abuse, for a cloak of iniquity, that which is meant for the attainment of grace. Never may our prayers thus aggravate our sin! Never may they fail to help us unto holiness! Never may they be designed for show! Never destitute of faith and love! Then the more frequently we pray, we shall live the nearer unto God. And the longer we make our prayers, we shall pass the more time in thoughts of heaven. And the more we think of heaven, and the nearer we live to God, we shall be so much the less likely to oppress the weak or to defraud the helpless; so much the less ambitious of worldly honour, or vain of worldly dress.

Lord, be Thou ever at our right hand, to make all our enemies our footstool; to subdue our pride and covetousness; to set us above the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Christ commendeth a poor widow.

1 And he looked up, ¹and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two || mites.

3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

5 ⁵ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

6 *As for* these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign *will there be*, when these things shall come to pass?

8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

¹ Mark 12. 41.

|| See Mark 12. 42.

⁵ Matt. 24. 1.

§ 258. *That our actions are estimated by our means and motives.*

The praising of this widow by our Lord enforces a doctrine, which we cannot too often call to mind; that our actions under the Gospel are estimated according to our means and motives. Christ pronounced expressly, "this poor widow hath cast in more than they all." And He adds the reason, that she of her penury had "cast in all the living that she had." This should convince us that the different conditions of life are by no means so uneven in reality, as we are too apt to suppose. There is no widow so poor, but that she may give as much, in the judgment at least of Christ, as the very wealthiest in the land. There is no man so feeble, so ignorant or so forlorn, but that he may be counted to serve God as effectually, if only he serve as faithfully, as the most able, the most active of mankind. We may be equal then in faith. We may be equal in love. We may be equal in being beloved by our Lord. We may be equal in being saved through his merits, in enjoying through his merey everlasting life. How trifling in comparison, are the things in which we differ! One may have a spacious residence, and another not know where to lay his head. One may be clothed in purple and fine linen; and another scarce covered with rags. One may fare sumptuously every day; and another be glad to feed on the crumbs which fall from a rich man's table. All this difference may seem important today. But what will it be found to be tomorrow? what, if the sentence shall have gone forth to both, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee?" Ch. 12. 20. Are they not both made of the same dust? and must they not both to the same dust return? Have they not both the same hope of glory set before them? Did not the same Saviour die for both?

But further this sentence should make us look well to our own hearts, in whatsoever we may reckon ourselves to be serving God. If we are lowly, only where we have no room for pride; if sober, only where there is no occasion for intemperance; if we are honest where there is no profit in deceit, pure where no lust, and meek where no provocation to be cross; we do but out of our "abundance cast in unto the offerings of God." We are yet short of the spirit of the Gospel, till we can be patient in suffering, humble in prosperity; till we can in plenty deny ourselves, or out of penury, cast in all the living that we have. What an incredible amount of alms would this appear in the possessor of ample wealth! But are his lands and horses more to him, than were to the widow those two mites which were all she had? How far less than her's must their bounty be esteemed, if they give only what they never miss, what they scarcely know how else to dispose of!

The treasury, into which those offerings were cast, was for the use and repair of the temple. And whilst his disciples admired the building, and its contents, the stones in its walls, and the gifts within, our Lord began to warn them that it was soon to be destroyed. "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." When we consider that the gifts were cast in unto the treasury for this very temple's repair, we have fresh proof of how little their amount could signify, compared with the motive from which they were bestowed. Long before they could be wanted, both gifts and temple would be taken by the Romans and destroyed. And thus frequently it happens with that which here we undertake. However, carefully we plan, however diligently we labour, however freely we give; our object, as far as this world is concerned, many times fails. But if it have been our hearts' desire to do herein the will of Christ, in this we may notwithstanding have succeeded. If it have been our intent to subdue by selfdenial our rebellious passions, to mortify our covetousness, to suppress our anger, to humble our pride, in this we may have been making progress no less sure, from this we may derive no less ample profit. Let us then, in all we do, make our main end the honour of our Lord. Let us plan, let us labour, let us give, with a view always to the crown of glory. Then though we can give but little, we may be counted to give more than they all, more than all who give for earthly ends; and though the work of our hands here perish, we shall rejoice in the fruit of it for ever.

Christ foretelleth the visitation of Jerusalem.

9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

10 'Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14 'Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

18 'But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

20 'And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

¹ Matt. 24. 7.

² Matt. 10. 19.

³ Matt. 10. 30.

⁴ Matt. 24. 15.

§ 259. *That we must not give way to fear.*

This discourse evidently relates to what our Lord had before been speaking of, the destruction of the temple, as well as of the city of Jerusalem. It contains directions for the conduct of the disciples, under the pressure of this approaching distress. And these we may apply to our own instruction, under sorrow and suffering, to our preparation for the last coming of Christ to judge the world. And first we may here learn never to be alarmed, whether by wars or by commotions, whether by earthquakes, by famine, or by pestilence. Under all these trying circumstances, the duty of a Christian is still the same. "Be not terrified." Be not afraid, but that God will make all things work together for your good. Be not afraid, but believe. Be not afraid, but trust that through Christ you are redeemed to everlasting life. Be not afraid, but love.

The disciples are next warned that they should be delivered up to synagogues, to prisons, and to rulers, for the sake of Christ's name. They are assured that this shall turn for a testimony in their favour. They are exhorted to trust to Christ for direction from Heaven, as to what answer they should make. These their perils may lead us, when we reflect on them, to be thankful for the peace and security we enjoy, in the profession of the Christian faith. And as we have no testimony to bear to it, by imprisonment and stripes, so much the more should we do it honour in the conduct of our lives. How can we imagine that we should then have been willing to be martyrs, if we are not now desirous to be saints? How can we suppose that we should cheerfully have submitted to the pains of fire and sword, if we cannot now bear meekly the smile of scorn, or resist the cravings of desire? Again, the disciples are informed, that they shall be betrayed by their dearest friends and hated of all men, for the sake of the name of Christ. But they are told that not a hair of their heads should perish. And they are taught in patience to possess their souls. So likewise, if our Christian duty ever draws on us the displeasure of the world, or the hatred of those we love, we should console ourselves with thinking of God's tender care for all who obey his will. Not a hair of their heads shall perish. For we may not count that for lost which shall be restored in endless glory. And patience, if it have its perfect work, will secure both to soul and body, that through Christ they shall live for ever.

But though the disciples were to be patient, under any degree of persecution, which they might incur for the sake of the name of Christ, yet when the calamities of war began to encompass Jerusalem, then they were to fly for safety. The sword of foreigners was a fit scourge for the wickedness of the Jews; but to encounter it would then do no service to the cause of the Christians. Hence we learn the true method of discerning what dangers we ought patiently to abide, and what we should do well to flee from. We must cheerfully encounter all those in which the cause of the Gospel would be compromised by our flight; in which we may prove by our fortitude, our Christian faith. Whilst those which threaten health, or strength, or life for no better than a mere worldly end, those in which we risk our continuance in well doing for no end that concerns either God's honour, or the good of man, these are dangers which we must depart out of, if we are in the midst of them; and if we are out of them, we must not "enter thereinto."

God grant, that whilst we are never terrified by that which it is sin to fear, we may never fail to fear that which it is sin to do!

Christ foretelleth the last day.

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

37 And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount* of Olives.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

¹ Matt. 24. 29.

§ 260. *The certainty of the judgment.*

At this conclusion of the prophecy, our attention is more entirely directed to that day, when God "will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." Acts 17. 31. The sun, and the moon, and the stars, may possibly in the first instance represent the powers that are of earth; but the signs here spoken of, will at length be seen in the lights of the firmament on high. The first great distress might be in the land of Judæa; but the last will be in all nations of the earth. The hearts of the Jews no doubt failed them for fear, as the time of their punishment approached; but so will those of all mankind, when they shall see the Son of man "coming in a cloud with power and great glory." When He should so come to visit his rebellious city, the disciples were to look up, and lift up their heads: when He shall so come to visit a disobedient world, the faithful of all ages shall then rise in glory. And surely as the shooting forth of the fig tree is the sign of the coming of summer; so certainly is the fulfilment of this prophecy in its first sense, so certainly is the beginning of these things to come to pass, so certainly this is the sign, that the prophecy in its more obvious application, will be finally fulfilled. When therefore the disciples saw Jerusalem destroyed; when we are assured of its having been destroyed exactly in the manner here foretold; we may thence of a certainty know, that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

By "nigh at hand," in this and other like passages, our Saviour does not so much mean near in point of time, as close to us in point of reality. He designs, by these expressions and illustrations, to bring, as we may say, home to our hearts, the apprehension of things eternal, the expectation of his second coming to judge the world. These things are so strange, so passing all our ordinary notions, and require of us, if heartily believed, such painful selfdenial, such arduous exertion; that we are apt to shake off the impression of their certainty, by dwelling on the probability of their being far distant. Our Lord therefore here gives us a sign, by which we may be as sure of their taking place, as we are of summer's arriving after the shooting of the trees. And further He tells us, that "this generation," this order of things we live in, "shall not pass away," till all that He has spoken of be fulfilled. Perishable as that which we see around us is, it shall be preserved for the sake of Christ's words being accomplished, in order that the will of God may be done. And to this He adds, that "heaven and earth shall pass away;" this outward world, which we deem so sure, shall fail, and utterly vanish, whilst yet his words, shall "not pass away;" this prophecy shall surely take effect. What an argument have we here for conviction; what a motive for sobriety and watchfulness! Death and judgment are more sure than life and all its vanities. The sun, and moon, and stars, the earth and all that is therein, shall fail; but Christ's words shall not fail, his glorious advent shall come to pass. Let us take heed then to ourselves, for "as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." By soberness and temperance, by charity, devotion, and faith, let us take heed that, however unawares it come, it may find us always ready. Let us watch always, and pray always; always be on our guard against sin, always have our hearts both aware that God is present to help, and leaning on his help for safety. That so we may be accounted worthy to escape "all these things that shall come to pass;" worthy not for our own sakes, worthy not by our own righteousness; but worthy for the sake of Jesus Christ, worthy through that righteousness which is by faith in Him.

Christ is sold to the Jews.

1 Now 'the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

3 'Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them || in the absence of the multitude.

7 'Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

¹ Matt. 26. 2.

² Matt. 26. 14.

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

|| Or, *without tumult*

³ Matt. 26. 17.

§ 261. *The duty of being prepared.*

See what it is that money once has done, all ye who delight in heaping up riches! It was for money, that Judas covenanted to betray his Lord. It was for money, that Christ was sold. It was for money, that they who thirsted for his blood, gained possession of our merciful Redeemer. Whosoever we are tempted to be covetous, when we long for what is not justly ours, when we would make haste to gain, or be slow to spend or give; let us think of this sad use that money once was put to, and beware lest we also sell our Lord for silver. Ere Jesus was thus betrayed, "Satan," we read, "entered into Judas." Satan enters into us, ere we wilfully undertake any flagrant sin. How else could we be so mad, as to defy the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us, the Holy Ghost who alone can make us holy? How else could we be so ungrateful, as to fail to love Him, who has first so greatly loved us? It is an enemy that has done this. It is Satan who has entered into us. God forbid that we should suffer him so to enter any more! God help us to cast him out of our hearts for ever!

It is added of Judas Iscariot, that he was "of the number of the twelve." This is often noted in the Gospels; and therefore it is worthy of our frequent observation. It should remind us, that when God uses the ministry of man, He need not make his ministers perfect. It should help us to look up, through the ministry, unto Him who is our only true minister and priest, our one only shepherd and bishop of our souls. If we were accustomed to look more to Him for help and guidance, we should be less forward to censure those whom He has appointed to assist us, during the time of his absence from the earth. We should be less disheartened to find in them imperfection and sin, when we are sure of all truth, all strength, all virtue, all grace, in Him.

Our Lord would have preparation made as usual for the passover, though He knew that He Himself was, as the apostle calls Him, "our Passover." 1 Cor. 5. 7. That is to say, He was the very "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13. 8; to save us from the death eternal, due to every one of us for our sins. The passover was a type or figure of his death, and of the atonement of his blood. And now that the reality should take place, it was time that the sign should be done away with. And yet even at the very end, He honours it with observing it. Let us learn to honour all the ordinances of God, for this single reason that they are his. Let us be assured that it is good for us to observe them, whether we can tell why it is good for us, or no. We shall find, as He has said to us. We shall be sure of profit, where He has promised grace. Let us make ready, not only where we know not why, but when we reckon it scarce possible to do what we prepare for. In temptation, though we might expect to fall, let us be prepared to give thanks, as for the victory. In death, though we might reasonably apprehend to perish, let us die with thoughts fitted for eternal life. And whilst this life and this world continue, and we might be apt to suppose that they will long abide, let us daily watch, and daily trim our lamps, that we may be ready to meet the bridegroom, in case He should this very hour return to judgment.

How busy were the Jews, on the occasion of the Passover, to put away all leaven from their houses! But how loath often are we to remove from our hearts that leaven of malice and wickedness, which our Lord commands us to suppress! How much is there still remaining of those evil propensities, which perpetually engender renewed transgression; which keep alive the succession of iniquity, both in ourselves and in those around us! Would that we might once be free from evil; once clean in our own consciences, and in the sight of God; once purposed, without reserve of evil inclination, to love God, and God only; to serve God, and God only; and to love and serve Him, as He is revealed to our faith, in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Christ ordaineth his holy supper.

14 ¹ And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, || With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 ² And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body

which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

21 ³ But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

23 And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

¹ Matt. 26. 20.

|| Or, I have heartily desired.

² Matt. 26. 26.

³ Matt. 26. 21.

§ 262. *How kindly we are invited to the Lord's supper.*

How careful was our Lord to observe the exact time for the eating of unleavened bread! "When the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him." What pains ought we to take to be punctual in our attendance on all religious duties! Let us mark, in each year, and month, and week, the days that are set apart for religious solemnities. Let us mark in each day the appointed hour for public worship or for private devotion. How great was the condescension of our Lord, that He should desire to eat with his disciples the passover before He suffered! How great is his condescension unto us, that He should desire to eat with us also his last supper; that He should have left us an ordinance, wherein we may, as it were, eat with Him, and drink with Him; whilst our thoughts are engaged with what He suffered for our sakes? Oh that every one who accounts himself a disciple, would apply to himself these gracious words: "with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you!" Oh that every one would accept this kind invitation: "Take this, and divide it among yourselves!" Oh that every one would consider, how the bread eaten at the supper here ordained is the body of Christ given for them, how the cup there administered is the new testament in the blood of Christ, which is shed for them! And yet far be it from those to come to the communion of Christ's body and blood, who are conscious all the while that they indulge in sins, which they neither repent of, nor endeavour to amend. Far be it from our communicants, that it should be said of them, "Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table!" Let them still stay away, who purpose still wilfully to sin. Let them still stay away, who still hesitate between two masters. Let them still stay away from the supper of the Lord; for they have as yet no part in his inheritance, they must be shut out from sharing in his joys. And yet if any such frequent that table, this should be no hindrance to the rest. This should no more keep back others from communion, this will no more rob them of the spiritual food there given than the presence of Judas could deprive the other apostles of the comfort they derived from the blessing of the Lord.

And think not, that because it must be that many sin, therefore any may sin on with impunity. It was determined in the divine counsels that the Son of man should thus go, thus be betrayed to death. And yet woe was also determined against him, by whom the Son of man should go! It may be certain that many will offend; and yet it is "woe unto the world because of offences!" and especially, remember, it is "woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Matt. 18. 7. Let us never then be encouraged in doing wrong by the prevalence of sin in our neighbours. Let us inquire rather each among ourselves, let us each in our own selves examine whether we are guilty of doing this thing; whether in any way we have a hand in the betraying of our Lord. If we have, we may reasonably conclude that we are unfit to eat of his supper. But then let us examine further how sad is our condition if for any reason we eat not of it. Let us consider, how great was his love in this ordinance, how pressing his invitation, how earnest his desire, that we should with Himself partake of it. And then let us ask ourselves what thing can we do worse, what sin can we commit greater, than never to go nigh unto that table at all?

Ought we not of our own selves to wish to partake of food so excellent provided for our use? Ought we not to desire with very earnest affection to eat this passover with our Lord? Ought we to be glad of any excuse to avoid receiving this holy sacrament? Or ought we not rather to be deeply concerned at any thing which prevents us from attending? Ought we not to be anxious to receive it as often as opportunity is presented; that we may shew forth, as frequently as possible, the Lord's death, till He come? See 1 Cor. 11. 26. And should we not be sure thus to do, and thus to feel if only on that death of his our hopes of heaven were founded; if from that death of his we were deriving, as we ought to do, by faith, the nourishment of that spiritual life, in which alone we truly live?

Christ exhorteth to humility.

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

25 ¹ And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26 But ye *shall not be so*: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For whether *is greater*, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is not he that sitteth at meat?* but I am among you as he that serveth.

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my

Father hath appointed unto me;

30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, ² and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, ³ Satan hath desired to *haze* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 ⁴ And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

¹ Matt. 20. 25.

² Matt. 19. 28.

³ 1 Pet. 5. 8

⁴ Matt. 26. 34.

§ 263. *Consolation to the fallen.*

Who would have thought that at this last supper of their Lord, there would have been strife among the disciples, which of them should be accounted the greatest? What a sure proof have we here that our Lord had given to St. Peter no such supreme authority as some mistaken Christians have imagined! What a warning, that the seeking after any such supremacy is an utter violation of the spirit of the Gospel! What an untimely question was this to raise at any hour, but most of all in an hour of affliction; in an hour when the disciples had been warned that their Lord was then actually betrayed, when they had begun to inquire among themselves *which* of them it was that should do this thing! If ever we are ourselves compassed with difficulties, if we are beset with trouble and temptation, let us at least not add wrangling and strife. Let us meet our difficulties by an increase of goodwill amongst each other. And the more we are distressed from without, we shall be the more at peace within. Times of public peril, or of private distress, are times, above all others, for every one to give up somewhat of his own claim to precedence; for every one to vie with his neighbour only in doing good, only in being humble, only in striving which should most serve his brethren, most help the helpless and relieve the sufferers.

And yet it must be owned that the times of trouble are also times of great temptation. It was in our Lord's greatest difficulty, and when Peter most thought that he never should have denied Him, then it was that Satan took opportunity to tempt Him to the denying of his Lord. Let us look to it then, that we suffer not ourselves to be led astray by too lively a confidence in our resolutions to do good. Often indeed, and especially when in trouble, we do no doubt all of us resolve, the liar to speak truth, the drunkard to become sober, the unclean to be henceforth pure, and the covetous no longer to love this present world. But if we make these resolutions in our own strength, we are none the nearer to a Christian life and conversation. For we live in a world of spirits. Satan is desiring to have us, that he may sift us as wheat; that he may toss us in temptations, as corn in a sieve. And it is only by the help of God's Holy Spirit that we can resist the devil, keep our good purposes, and have grace to stand in the hour of temptation.

Christ Himself prayed for Peter, calling him Simon, as if to shew that he now would lose that character for firmness, which his new name Peter signified. See Matt. 16. 18. John 1. 42. Christ Himself prayed for Simon, that his faith should not fail; and yet Simon, as we read afterwards, transgressed. Shall we then marvel if our prayers for a time seem fruitless? Shall we despond if occasionally we even greatly fall? Shall we doubt that we may yet be converted, yet return unto the fulness of faith and love, yet be able hereafter when strengthened ourselves, be able, both by our counsel and example to strengthen our brethren? No; let us be persuaded, that though thrice we should deny the Lord that bought us, though thrice we should fall into any grievous sin, there is pardon still ready to be vouchsafed, there is grace still accessible to our prayers. Only the more deeply we are persuaded of this truth, we must the more heartily endeavour to sin not at all; we must pray more fervently, purpose more stedfastly, more utterly distrust ourselves, and more entirely rely on God for help. In proportion as we are convinced that there is mercy with Him, therefore must we more fear to offend. See Ps. 130. 4. In proportion as we are more assured of his love, therefore must we love Him more. See 1 John 4. 19.

Thou, Lord, who knowest all things, knowest in how many things we offend. Pray for us, we pray Thee, that our faith fail not! Pray for us, and teach us to pray for ourselves! Teach us to pray with the firm assurance, that through Thee we shall be heard! Teach us, the more we pray for pardon, the more to labour that we sin no more!

Christ prayeth at the mount of Olives: is betrayed by Judas.

35 'And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, ' And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

39 'And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

40 'And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's

cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

47 And while he yet spake, 'behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

¹ Matt. 10. 9.

² Is. 53. 12.

³ Matt. 26. 36.

⁴ Matt. 26. 41.

⁵ Matt. 26. 47.

§ 264. *Watchfulness and prayer.*

Our Lord first reminds his apostles, that when He sent them without purse and scrip, they lacked nothing. He now bids them provide themselves with all things needful, as for a journey; nay, and with a sword also as for war. This no doubt He speaks by way of shewing them, in a figure, what difficulties they had now to contend with, what zeal, and courage, and forethought, would be required for success in the work of an apostle. For that He did not mean them to use swords for self defence, much less for the conversion of the heathen, is evident from what passed afterwards, when Peter smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. See ver. 51. Matt. 26. 52. And besides amongst so many as twelve, two swords could not have been "enough" for use, though they might well serve to represent in a lively manner the necessity of activity and resolution. Hence we may profitably observe, that there is no profession however evil in itself, however baneful in its consequences, either to those who follow it, or to the rest of mankind, which may not be made to furnish us with useful instruction in our Christian course. We are to be prudent, as the unjust steward was. And as soldiers are reckless of their lives, patient of fatigue, obedient to command, and ever watchful at their post; so should Christians, with like diligence and zeal in their high and holy cause, take to themselves "the shield of faith," "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" Eph. 6. 16, 17; and go forth at all risk of labour and of life, to be made, like the great Captain of their salvation, "perfect through sufferings." Heb. 2. 10.

To his description of the weapons of our spiritual warfare, St. Paul adds the two great points, which were on this occasion also enforced by Christ, watchfulness and prayer: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Eph. 6. 18. "Why sleep ye?" This question we may well put unto ourselves, in our lethargy and apathy to every holy work. "Why sleep ye?" This we well may ask of those who suffer the enemy of souls to draw them into sin without resistance. "Why sleep ye?" This we well may say of what faint resistance we ourselves have offered to his daily and hourly temptations. "Why sleep ye! rise, and pray." Awake, my soul! Arise to prayer! Rouse up thy sluggish faculties, thy cold affections! Shake off thy dreams of worldly vanity! Hear with thine ears! See with thine eyes! Behold thine enemy is upon thee! Behold he has at hand the pit of destruction! Put on thine armour of celestial temper! Betake thyself to praying unto God! Kneel, stubborn knees, for see how Jesus, when He prayed, "kneeled down!" Feel, hardened heart, for see how Jesus felt! Behold his agony of pain, his sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground!" Behold, and feel thou thus! Behold, and do thou likewise!

"And while he yet spake," during the utterance of his earnest prayer, the multitude were approaching to take Him by force. At the very moment when He was thus counselling his disciples to pray, Judas came, and betrayed Him with a kiss. Would we see in its most offensive light the traitor's treason? Would we see in their true and hateful colours our own manifold iniquities? Let us take into the same view the sufferings of Christ, the prayer He uttered, the agony He felt, the gracious words He spake, the bitter death He died. How could we then fail to pray, if we were to feel his love in praying in our behalf? And how, if we were to pray as He would have us, how could we then fail to conquer?

Christ is denied by Peter.

49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat

down among them.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

¹ Matt. 26. 57.

² Matt. 26. 69.

§ 265. *How we should be good to the evil.*

It was Peter, we learn from St. John 18. 10, who in his zeal seems to have taken literally the injunction of Christ, to provide himself with a sword; and who was now anxious to use it in the defence of his Master. It was Peter who so soon afterwards, in spite of all his resolution, was guilty of thrice denying Christ in public. Let us learn how close is the connexion between presumptuous confidence and shameful frailty. Let us call to mind, for our own greater warning, the declaration of Solomon, that "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Prov. 16. 18. It was for Peter to smite with the sword. It was for Christ to touch the ear of him that was smitten, and to heal him. Which then would we follow for our example? Which system would we pursue for the redress of evil in the world? severity or gentleness, punishment or love? They who are in authority may lawfully use punishment; for of the magistrate it is thus written by the apostle, "he beareth not the sword in vain." Rom. 13. 4. But for private persons to take the law into their own hands, for them to oppose wrong by violence, to avenge themselves of robbery, or even murder, by blood shedding, this seems most remote from that Christian temper, which would melt with kindness the obdurate hearts of those who are most bent on doing ill.

In the fall of Peter we see what comes of evil company. The apostle had sat down amongst the enemies of his Lord. Let us avoid the conversation of them that know not Christ, if we would not ourselves be tempted to deny Him. Here too we see the risk of making a brother to offend, by indulging as did the maidservants here spoken of, a vain or vexatious curiosity. Let us never for our own satisfaction persist in those unwelcome questions which are likely to provoke anger or to tempt to falsehood. Here further we see how one offence usually leads to the commission of another. And let us take warning against denying our Lord once, lest we be led on to deny Him thrice. But, Lord, in our oft repeated transgressions, be Thou nigh to look on us with love, and we may yet have hope to be forgiven! What a look was that which Thou didst cast on Peter! What tears of bitterness were those he shed! What sweetness was mingled in his cup of woe, to think that, when most utterly he had forgotten Thee, when most he had set at naught thy love, Thou wert still caring for him, thinking of him, looking at him, loving him!

When we were sinners, God gave his Son for us; when we were sinners, Christ died for us on the cross. Such was his love for us. Such should be our love towards each other. Let no unworthiness in the objects of relief be any hindrance to our zeal in relieving them! Let no inposition that may be practised, no denial of benefits received, check in us the desire to cast our bread upon the waters; or make us for one moment doubt the assurance, that, though it may be in some cases ill bestowed, and in many unthankfully received, we shall be sure to find it "after many days!" Eccles. 11. 1. And let us take pains, after the example here set us by our Lord, to add kindness in our manner to charity in our deeds. Let our very looks convince those, who have used us ill, that we desire to return good for evil. And how know we, or have we ever tried, whether love so unexpected, so undeserved, would not wring from the most bitter of our enemies the tears of conviction, remorse, and thankfulness?

How often, Lord, must Thou have looked upon us, and we not have noted thy kind regards! How often in our sins must we have stayed to smile, when we should rather have gone out to weep bitterly! Never may we henceforth fail to mourn for sin; never fail to love in return for pardon!

Christ is blasphemed ; owneth to being the Son of God.

63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.

64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?

65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him unto their council, saying,

67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:

68 And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.

69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

71 And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

¹ Matt. 27. 1.

² Mark 14. 62.

§ 266. *That we should follow readily our own convictions.*

It was a chief part of our Lord's humiliation to be mocked and spoken against blasphemously. Words of contempt are often more hurtful to the feelings, than acts of injury. Let us learn from this divine example to bear with patience even these most trying of all affronts. What can be said to us more offensive, than for them that held Jesus to bid Him prophecy who it was that smote Him? What could be more offensive to Him, considering that He was not only a prophet, but even Himself God? And how, if He was not God, how else could St. Luke mean, that what was said was spoken blasphemously against Him? Nay how else could Christ assent to what the elders and chief priests and scribes demanded of Him, "art thou then the Son of God?"

And yet shocking to our feelings as such blasphemy must seem, we may do well to consider, with shame, that even in this Christian land Christ is still blasphemed every day. There are some who still deny Him to be the Son of God. There are many, who, owning Him for the blessed Son, yet profanely take his name in vain. There are many more who make light of his commandments. And what is this but mocking at his words? Whilst thus his word is by many set at nought, and He Himself denied, let us on all due occasions make profession of our faith in Him. And often also in our thoughts and prayers let us repeat our solemn conviction that we hold Him to be the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. Let us lay the ground of our trust in this rock of our salvation. Let us love Him as our Redeemer, whilst we praise Him, and pray to Him, as our God.

How fearful to the professed unbeliever, how profitable as a warning to ourselves, are these words of Christ to the rulers of the Jews: "If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go." Is it not here plainly taught us, that no testimony however strong can suffice, where the heart is bent against belief? Is it not here expressly signified, that there are questions, which we are averse to answer, and would not, if we could help it, answer even to our Lord? And has not this often been our case with those inquiries, which are put to us in the word of God, or which our conscience, God's voice within us, puts? Has it not asked, and we would not answer, how long wilt thou continue in sin? how long wilt thou refuse to repent? Has it not said, and we would not believe, thy iniquity will be thy ruin, thy Saviour has died for thy sins, his grace is sufficient for thee, his word can make thee whole? Are not these things written in God's word? Are they not set before us for our deliverance from sin, for our encouragement in holiness, for our peace, for our assurance of joy? Why then are we not glad at these tidings? Why are we not all at peace with each other, at peace with our consciences, and at peace with God? Is it not God that has told us these things? has He not told us by his only begotten Son? Is it not He who is the Word of the Father? Is it not He who came down from heaven on purpose to give us life and light? Why then do we not believe? Why? if it be not that we are still bent on sin, still prefer in our hearts sin to holiness, earth to heaven.

Lord, if thus Thou tellest us, grant that we may believe thy word! Lord, if thus thy Holy Spirit asks us for our good, grant that we may truly answer; may own with humility our own offences, and acknowledge thankfully thy love! Make us to bear faithful testimony to thy most gracious dealings! Make us glad to receive that witness which Thou with thine own mouth hast given! Help us both to say and know that Thou art the Son of God! Help us to have a lively faith in the atonement of thy death! Teach us to love that which Thou dost command, and to desire that which Thou dost promise! Guide us to follow Thee, in all lowliness, patience, and long suffering; and in the end let us enter into thy blessed inheritance, there to reign with Thee where Thou art, on the right hand of the power of God!

Christ is accused before Pilate ; is sent to Herod.

1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him, and said, Thou sayest it.

4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan.

7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto

Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Matt. 27. 11.

§ 267. *What companions we ought to prefer.*

Pilate was the Roman governor of Judæa, holding the supreme court at Jerusalem. Cæsar was the head of the Roman empire, unto whom the whole world was then subject. So that if Jesus had set up for being a king, as here pretended, He would have been easily found guilty of treason. His enemies, however, well knew that He laid no claim to any earthly tribute; and therefore their accusation of his having done so, was wilfully and maliciously false. And this probably is the reason why our Lord takes no notice of it at all. Whereas when Pilate asked Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" He is now no longer silent. "Thou sayest it." Thou sayest the thing that is. He assents, because here to have been silent might have led the governor into error. For He was indeed a King, though not in the sense which his enemies intended. Let us learn that there may be falsehood even in silence; let us learn from our Lord to beware of committing it. Let us not be content to keep our tongues from lying. Let us make a point, when we speak the truth, to speak the whole truth. For the sin of falsehood is in the heart; it is the attempt, it is the intention to deceive. It is the misleading the fellow creature whom we are bound to inform. Whether by our words or by our silence, by our actions or by our looks, if by any means we give him a notion other than we know to be the truth, we are false, in the sight of God who sees our hearts, and who hears though we hold our peace.

Notwithstanding our Lord's acknowledging that He was a King, Pilate could find no fault in Him. To this heathen it was plain that no treason was intended. But the Jews were only so much "the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people." Thus our Lord's going about to do good, his preaching of repentance, his healing the sick, his raising the dead, were construed into unlawful and seditious conduct. And thus also was the preaching of the apostles described by the Jews which believed not, as a turning of the world upside down. See Acts 17. 6. Would that both their writings and our Saviour's words might produce in us a conversion worthy of this description, might stir up in our hearts that strife of good against evil, which is the only tumult that Christ would wish to raise!

Pilate being aware of our Lord's innocency, ought at once to have set Him free. But though he appears to have been unwilling to do wrong, he was much more afraid to do that which was right. It is not enough to be afraid of doing evil; we must also love to do good. We must rejoice, at all cost of our own convenience to be the means of giving liberty to the captive, or maintaining the cause of the innocent. It was out of a sinful fear, that Pilate sent Christ to Herod. It was with a sinful joy that Herod received Him. "He was exceeding glad;" not with any view of the saving of his soul, but for the gratifying of a vain curiosity. "And he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him;" not for the conviction of his heart, but merely for the entertainment of his eyes. Never may we seek in any ordinance of religion, the amusement of the outward sense, but only the improvement of the inward disposition! Never sounds or sights of earthly pleasure, but only the edification of the soul!

"And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together:" the very day on which Herod sent back Christ to Pilate, and that, as one would think, much to his annoyance. What a reproof is here for Christians who fall out with each other over trifling grievances, such as helped rather to make friends of a heathen and a Jew! And what a friendship have we here described; a friendship, that was enmity with God! an unjust judge, and a king whose amusement was to mock the innocent; these were fit to shake hands on so sad an occasion! Never, Lord, may we make friends with thine enemies! Never may we be at variance with them that are thy friends! Never may we make sinful pleasure the bond of our society! Rather let us choose for our companions those whom we may believe that Thou hast chosen; those whom from their piety and zeal we may suppose to have been appointed through thy merits to the fellowship of saints and angels!

Christ is delivered to the will of the Jews.

13 ¹ And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:

19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 And Pilate || gave sentence that it should be as they required.

25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

26 ² And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

¹ Matt. 27. 23.

|| Or, assented.

² Matt. 27. 32.

§ 268. *How we should bear the cross of Christ.*

Pilate again bears witness that he could find no fault in Jesus. Again he shews a willingness to release his prisoner. Whilst the Jews "were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified." Thus far we see the uncircumcision, which was by nature judging them who by the letter and circumcision did transgress the law. See Rom. 2. 27. And herein we may have a warning, how privileges abused both sear the conscience and increase the condemnation. But would we know what we should be without privileges? would we see how far the uncircumcision, which was by nature, could fulfil the law? would we understand how much we owe to the grace of the Holy Ghost in any good that we have ever actually done? We need only look to what Pilate did. We need only observe that, willing as he was to release Jesus, he delivered Him in the end to the will of the Jews. Thus end the good intentions of the natural man. Thus end the best of purposes we can form, if we form them in reliance on our own strength and wisdom.

Herod too had examined our blessed Lord, and found in Him "nothing worthy of death." So ample is the testimony of his innocency! So important was it for us to know, that his enemies could prove no offence against Him. He was then a Lamb without spot. His atonement was entire, perfect; sufficient for the sins of all mankind. But the more He was proved to be innocent the more the people would have Him punished as guilty. What abundance of consolation should this fact afford to such of us as suffer from the malice of others, when we are aware that we have in no wise provoked it. For our sins we do indeed well deserve all this, and all other evil we can meet with. But though this were not the case, though we had no sins meriting this punishment at God's hands, might we not be still content to suffer wrong, when we reflect that it was thus that Christ suffered; when we consider that He who was the express image of the Father submitted for our sakes to such indignity as this? Surely it must be good for us also to endure the scorn and contradiction of those, who, as we should hope, know no better. It would be good for us, if first it reminded us that though we deserve not such treatment of our fellow creatures, we deserve much more severity at the hand of God. It will be good for us, if it make us both humble in our hearts, and in our conduct more circumspect not to give offence, not to have our good evil spoken of. See Rom. 14. 16. It will be good for us, if it incline us still the more to be patient in well-doing, in the hope that we may overcome evil with good. See Rom. 12. 21.

Thus might we, like Simon the Cyrenian, bear the cross after Jesus. This was done probably when our Lord, through weariness, could no longer carry it Himself. For the weight must have been heavy; and the spirits must at such a time have been greatly oppressed. What then must be the common frame of mind, of those amongst the disciples of Christ, who would take up their cross daily, and follow Him? Is it to be mirth without sobriety, or ought it not to be seriousness without gloom? A cross bearer is one who has a burden on his heart, one who feels the weight of sin to be grievous and intolerable. He is one who thinks often of what Christ endured; who mourns that he himself has helped by sin to swell those bitter pangs; and who laments with unaffected sorrow that they are so little regarded by the world. And this burden he bears "after Jesus;" in the way Christ went before him, after the pattern of his meekness, gentleness, and love. Whilst he is ready to condemn himself, he thinks no evil of his neighbour. And whilst he grieves continually in his own heart, he rejoices in the Lord always. See Phil. 4. 4.

Christ is crucified.

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

30 ¹ Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

31 ² For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

32 ³ And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place which is called || Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

¹ Is. li. 19. Hos. x. 8. Rev. vi. 16.

² 1 Pet. iv. 17.

³ Matt. xxvii. 38.

|| Or, the place of a skull.

§ 269. *The fruit of forgiveness.*

It was well meant in this great company to follow Jesus, and in the women also to weep and lament for Him. Sympathy in affliction is sweet to those who suffer; and it is our duty both to feel and to express it. But in this case the Saviour of mankind was not so greatly to be pitied, as they who wept in his behalf. The cross was to Him, what our cross might always be to us, a crown of glory. Whilst to them the day was soon to come, when they should suffer, in the desolation of their city, the extremity of want and woe. So will it be also hereafter, amongst all nations of mankind. A day is fast approaching, when the wicked will "say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." To be buried in the depths of the earth will be greatly to be preferred, to meeting the countenance of a Judge whom the sinner has ever wilfully affronted. For if these things were done in a green tree, if on Christ, the source of life to all things living, such suffering and death could be inflicted, what must we think that they will undergo who are dead in trespasses and sins, "what shall be done in the dry?" Surely neither all that our Lord endured, nor all that befel afterwards these daughters of Jerusalem, can give us the least notion of that endless misery, which awaits the impenitent offender. Let us weep then for ourselves and for our children. Let us weep to think that we are born into the world liable to this eternal perdition. Let us weep to conceive it possible, God grant it may not be probable, that either we, or they, or any of us, may thus perish from the light of his countenance for ever.

Two malefactors were led with Christ to be put to death at the same time. This was the very height of indignity. But this was also the fulfilling of a prophecy. There is no evil that man can do, out of which God cannot bring forth good. The affront, here offered by the Jews to our Lord, served to accomplish a prophecy of their own Scriptures. See Isaiah 53. 12. It serves therefore to confirm the faith of Christians. It serves to convince us, at this distant day, that the Jesus, who was thus numbered with the transgressors, was very Christ. And how greatly should this temper the severity of our judgments against such as suffer, like these malefactors, by the sentence of the laws. To be numbered amongst these outcasts of society, was one of the signs by which the Jews ought to have known their Messiah; to be "in the same condemnation," ver. 40, though He had "done nothing amiss." Let us hope that through his mercy and merits hereafter some of them may be with Him; some, though we know not which, and though we may justly fear, not many, who are raised by grace, at the latest hour, and from the worst of sins, to repentance and faith and love.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." What a prayer was this, at such a moment! What an example of meekness and patience, of gentleness and kindness, for us to follow at all hours, on all occasions! In our intercourse with each other, however deeply we are hurt in our feelings, let us at least suppose our brother to have meant us no offence. However much he may have injured our property, let us give him credit, as far as possible, for having meant no wrong. What peace would such a view of things produce amongst friends and neighbours! What peace would it insure in our own hearts! The perverse may oppose themselves; the insolent may affront; the false and malicious may revile. Neither their words nor actions can do us harm, or interfere with the current of our happiness, so long as we have grace at each injury to repeat, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" And what words of mercy have we here for the encouragement of our Christian hope! what a proof that the Judge, who has to pronounce our sentence, will put the kindest of all conceivable constructions on the worst of practicable acts. Whilst therefore we weep to think how ill our sins deserve, let us at the same time rejoice to know, how far better than our deserts we shall receive. Even for those who crucified the Saviour of the world, there was allowed something for their ignorance of what they were about. And so far as our ignorance is no fault of ours, so far as we sin for want of knowing better, and know no better for want of having been better taught, we may venture with all humble thankfulness to hope, that the voice of the same Mediator is still heard to say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Christ between two thieves on the cross ; giveth up the ghost.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the || earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, ' Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

|| Or, land.

¹ Ps. 31. 5.

§ 270. *The way to die a Christian death.*

We cannot think that the rulers and the soldiers would have thus mocked and derided Christ, if they had known who He really was. See how great is the danger of any evil habit; how perilous the practice of mockery and scorn. See how often, if in such mirth we indulge at all, it may happen that we affront those persons, whom we least would wish! We shall do well then herein to consider every man a brother of our own, whose feelings we would in no wise hurt. We shall do better, to see in every man a brother of our Lord, nay the image of our Lord Himself; and to reflect, if in any instance we are tempted to deride, that even thus, in this form, which we would make light of, was Christ Himself derided.

And here also we have a signal instance how Christ crucified, whether seen or preached, is effectual for the converting of a sinner. Here we have fulfilled what our Lord had elsewhere said, "the one shall be taken, and the other left." Matt. 24. 40. Both were malefactors. Both at first had reviled our Lord. See Matt. 27. 44. Both were within reach of the means of salvation. Both were close to the cross of Christ. Yet one spent those last moments in reviling Him, which the other employed in penitence and prayer. Of those who shall be saved, and of those who must be lost, the opportunities and privileges may often be the same. But see how much depends on how we use them! See how much depends upon God's grace inclining us to use them for the best! And see further how many things are here recorded as being done by him that was forgiven! He faithfully reproves sin in his neighbour. "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" He acknowledges his own sinfulness. "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." And whilst he feels that his own sufferings are the due reward of his sins, he bears witness to Jesus, that He had "done nothing amiss." And above all, he concludes all with prayer, with prayer founded on faith in Christ: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

But here think not only of the one thief who was saved on the cross; whilst you forget that the other was very probably lost. Trust not that you may therefore put off safely to the end, that amendment of life which should take place from this hour. Are you sure that when death shall come, you will be like the one thief rather than the other? Are you sure that you shall then have grace to pray to Christ, and faith to lay hold of his cross? You are not. You can know no more, than that now is the day of salvation. Now God calls. Will you now hear? Now Christ cries unto you, Come unto me. Will you now come? Will you now believe? Will you now come and be saved? If not, what is it that now hinders you? And what ground have you to think, but that the same, or some more fatal hindrance, will beset you in your last hour? Turn then thou sinner that art self condemned, turn from the cross of the malefactor, to the cross of Christ! See there your real ground of hope for pardon, not in the thief saved, but in Christ who saved him; not in the late contrition of your fellow sinner, but in the blood of that Lamb without spot, which taketh away the sins of the world! See there your true pattern of a Christian life, even that which has no need to be repented of! See there your true example of a Christian death, even that which concludes a Christian life! "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These are words which we should rejoice to be able to say, when the end of life shall come. And how shall we then say words like these, if now we never love God as our Father, or make it our chief endeavour to obey his will? How, if we never live by faith, never walk in holiness of life, how shall we be able so to die, as that the beholders shall glorify God, and say, "Certainly this was a righteous man?"

Christ is buried.

48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

50 ¹ And, behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a counsellor; *and he was* a good man, and a just:

51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) *he was* of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body

of Jesus.

53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

¹ Matt. 27. 57.

§ 271. *Against selfishness.*

From the death and burial of our Lord St. Paul has drawn an argument for a holy life, describing it as the dying unto sin, and the being buried with Christ in his death. See Rom. 6. 4, 11. And he speaks of himself and of his fellow labourers in the Gospel as “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” 2 Cor. 4. 10. Let us therefore now reflect on the condition of Christ buried. Let us consider ourselves as being buried with Him in his death. Let us endeavour to bear about in the body his dying for us. Let us keep our hands as clear from wrong, as though they were laid in the grave; our eyes from looking after evil, our tongues from talking folly or iniquity. Let us mortify the lusts of the flesh; hungering for no dainty food, or at least not gratifying our appetite; thirsting for no excess of drink, or at least refraining from its enjoyment. Let us enjoy nothing that is unlawful; let us feel that it would be no enjoyment to us. Let us abstain also from many things that are lawful, whensoever we may know it to be expedient, whensoever we should without them be more like to Christ. Then shall we, like Him, fare better in our death, than in this present life. And as He was taken from having no where to lay his head, and buried in the sepulchre of the rich; so shall we be removed from our wants and infirmities, to enjoy the riches of eternal life.

And here let us observe of these faithful women who designed to embalm our Lord, how carefully they “rested on the sabbath day according to the commandment.” This was on the day hallowed among the Jews, the day counted as their seventh in order, either the seventh from the creation of the world, see Exod. 20. 12, or if that reckoning, as is probable, had been lost, the seventh from their deliverance out of the land of Egypt. See Deut. 5. 15. On this day our Lord lay dead in the sepulchre of Joseph. On the next, which was the first day of the Jewish week, He arose from the dead. Hence Christians have ever since counted this first day for their seventh, have rested on this first day as their sabbath, “according to the commandment.” Let us be watchful that on our Christian sabbath we rest from our worldly work. Let us be desirous to make it what we call it, the Lord’s day, by more than ordinary diligence in that devotion of heart and edification of the soul, which are most eminently the work of the Lord.

And further let us observe what an effort of self denial it must have been in Joseph of Arimathæa, to give a place, in his new tomb, to the body of a stranger. In our burials we indulge naturally the feelings of family affection. And for many who would entertain strangers at their table, there are few who would admit them to a place in their sepulchre. Here we learn that Christian kindness must overpower all other considerations. Here we see that, on due occasions, we should be ready to forego a burial place of our own, for our neighbour’s use. For our neighbour’s, nay, for a stranger’s use; for is not every stranger, whom we can serve, our neighbour? And is not every neighbour in the place of Christ Himself; entitled to all those good offices at our hands, which, if Christ were here, we should be happy to pay to Him?

If then we must thus refrain from selfishness, in a matter where our feelings are so deeply concerned, how much more ought we on all ordinary occasions, to look, not so much to our own advantage as to that of others! How willingly and cheerfully should we give up to their convenience, not only our comfort, and pleasure, but even the property which we hold most sacred? For what indeed will these things avail us, except as we do good with them? And what good can we do with them so appropriate, as to give freely what we have freely received. Let us ever be aware, that selfishness is not only most odious in the sight of men, but also most sinful in the eyes of God. Let us practise to leave off being selfish. Let us rejoice in any occasion which occurs, to mortify in ourselves the pleasure we are apt to feel in having any thing of our own. Let us rejoice rather to see it useful in the hands of our brother, than to have it hoarded unprofitably in our possession. And when the day of our departure shall arrive, though we had nothing left but a tomb to be buried in, nay, though we had thus disposed of our very sepulchre, how should we be the less fitted for the life we have then to enter, where nothing which we here have can follow us?

Christ's resurrection is declared by two angels.

1 Now ¹upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye *||* the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: ²remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

¹ Matt. 28. 1.

|| Or, *him that liveth.*

² Matt. 17. 23.

³ John 20. 6.

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

12 ³ Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

§ 272. *That we must rise again in holiness of life.*

It was a great privilege for these women to be the first who were made aware of our Lord's having risen from the dead. It was an advantage which they attained to, by having been the first to pay Him honour, when they thought Him dead. "Very early in the morning they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared." Let us do with zeal all the duties we are aware of, and we shall often meet with advantages which we little look for. The stone rolled away from the sepulchre may thus signify to us, how we shall find all hindrances removed, and help afforded to our frailty, if only we do in earnest try to do what we know we ought, however hard, however impracticable, it may seem. God has given us no commandment which is not for our good. And He has promised us, if we be disciples of our Lord, that no temptation shall befall us, beyond what we shall be able to bear; that He will with the temptation make also a way to escape. See 1 Cor. 10. 13. Angels there are that minister "for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1. 14. Though we see not their outward form we must believe that they are nigh to help. We may conceive their shining raiment, and imagine ourselves to hear their heavenly voices, reminding us of the promises of Christ our Lord.

Would that we may ever remember his words! Would that what He promised, and what He surely will perform, may never seem to us as "idle tales," and we believe them not! Yet how can we be believing, unless we live by faith; unless we act as if Jesus were indeed risen from the dead, and as if we should in like manner rise ourselves? And who that believes this of his own perishable body would here pamper it with excess of food, with luxury of dress, or with sensual indolence? Who that believes this of his mortal frame, that it will live in a new life for ever, who would fail here to mortify it in evil, and to exercise it in purity, diligence, and love? Surely if we never deny the flesh, if we never weary it in well doing, if we never subject it to the spirit, in a course of painful and profitable duties, we cannot really believe that it will rise again as Christ has said. We must be counted rather to take his words for idle tales, we must be numbered amongst them which believe not.

Never may we so dishonour Christ with our lives, while with our lips we profess to serve Him! Never may we fail to live according to our profession, as they that hope for a better resurrection! Never may we neglect to tell each other whatever of good we are taught from God ourselves! Never may we refuse to learn whatever God would teach, or what men as his ministers, are commissioned to enforce! Least of all let us neglect the great truths here repeated, that Christ must needs "be crucified, and the third day rise again." These are the words of consolation, of which the angels reminded the most faithful disciples of Christ. These are the doctrines best fitted either to moderate our sorrows, or to allay our fears. That our Lord must "be crucified," how should this help us to take up cheerfully any cross which we ourselves must bear! How should this convince us, that through his death we obtain eternal life! That He must on "the third day rise again," how should this replenish us with hope, that after the few short days of this present life, we shall rise to endless glory! Thus to derive from his death and resurrection the assurance that we shall not die eternally, this is to remember his words. But to suppose that we can by any other means be saved, than through Him; to what does this lead, but only to perplexity? To think that we can live but by his death, or can rise again, except by his resurrection; to purpose in our own wisdom, to try in our own strength, not his, to have a hope of holiness or heaven, and He not present to our thoughts; what is this but to seek "the living among the dead?"

Christ appeareth to the disciples in the way to Emmaus.

13 ¹ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers de-

livered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

¹ Mark 16. 12.

§ 273. *The necessity of divine teaching.*

There can be no doubt that our Lord must have risen from the grave, with a glorified body, such as we read He will give to all his disciples at the last day. See 1 Cor 15. 42. And yet this it appears was in some way like unto the body He had before; else there would have been no need for the eyes of the disciples to be "holden that they should not know him." This agrees with what we elsewhere have applied to the general resurrection, that God giveth "to every seed his own body." 1 Cor. 15. 38. And this may reasonably encourage us to think, that when there shall no longer be any occasion for our eyes to be holden, we shall have the happiness to know again those friends, whom we have loved on earth. But if it be true as we may in like manner argue from this passage, that we shall also know our Saviour Christ; if it be true that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him," and "shall see him as he is," 1 John 3. 2; ought not this to be the thing foremost in our thoughts when we meditate on our hope of heavenly bliss? Ought not this to be our chief topic of consolation in behalf of our friends who first depart, not that we shall see their face again, but that they, and we with them, shall behold Christ in glory? Where God is, there is heaven. Without Him heaven cannot be. With Him, though no one else were there, though all we now love were lost; with Him, can we suppose it to be possible, that heaven is not all we could desire?

It was natural for the disciples as they journeyed to talk of the things which had happened at Jerusalem. But it seems strange that when they knew the prophecies so well, they should still need the voice of Christ Himself, to direct them to a due interpretation. Yet so it is at this hour with ourselves. We may know all Scripture, not only the prophecies, but also the Gospels and Epistles; all this we may know without profitable understanding, unless our Lord Himself vouchsafe to teach us. Let us beseech Him to expound to us the things concerning Himself. Let us be aware, that without his doing so, all reading of the Scriptures is in vain. It may make us learned, but it will not make us wise; it will not make us wise unto salvation. See 2 Tim. 3. 15. It will not make what we read sink into our hearts. It will not make what we know influence our souls. Without this teaching of our Lord, we may indeed often talk of Him, as the disciples did, but be no nearer than they were to the knowing of Him. His name may be in our mouths, but not the love of Him in our hearts; nor any faith in his holy name be animating our thoughts, and words, and actions. We may know that He was a prophet mighty in word and deed; but not feel that He revealed God's will to us, for the direction of our lives. We may have heard how He was by the rulers condemned to death; and yet have never felt, how He died for us, and for our sins; have never found how by his stripes we are healed, by his blood we are reconciled to the Father. Only Christ Himself can teach us this. And He will do so, only if we ask of Him in prayer. And we cannot even pray properly without his help.

Turn Thou then us, O Lord; and so shall we be turned! Teach Thou us; and so shall we know Thee as we ought! Take from us all slowness of heart to believe; all coldness of affection to pray! Help us to commune with each other about the things which once happened unto Thee! Expound to us in all the Scriptures the things concerning Thyself! And the more we confer on thy sufferings, the more we are sad to think of thy affliction, do Thou, O Lord, the more draw near unto our souls, to give us knowledge, and faith, and joy!

Christ is known by the disciples, in breaking of bread.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went, and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

* 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

|| Or, ceased to be seen of them.

§ 274. *How we should draw in others to the Lord's supper.*

The apostle argues in favour of hospitality, that "some have entertained angels unawares." Heb. 13. 2. Here we see how these disciples had the happiness thus unwittingly to entertain their Lord. "They constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them." This is a still stronger motive to be hospitable. For though Christ be no longer tarrying on earth, we may be counted to give him food and lodging, if we do so, in his name, for his sake, to them that need it. When therefore "it is towards evening, and the day is far spent," let us be glad if we have opportunity, to give shelter to the houseless. Let us be glad if it is in our power, to relieve the wants of that brother for whom Christ died. And let us daily use ourselves to see in all mankind, especially in those whom we most might help, this brotherhood to Christ, this image of our Redeemer, this community of interest in his most precious death. Thus might we more frequently put in practice the love which we owe ourselves to owe to Him, if we could more continually bear in mind, that He has commissioned us to exercise it towards all, in whose behalf He died.

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." We may suppose that, ere their meal was over, they would have done this of themselves, in remembrance of their Lord. Or it may be, that in thus doing He meant to remind them, that thus they should fulfil his commandment. He had need to make Himself known to them; and He chose to do it by an action which was well calculated both to instruct, and to console them. It must at once have recalled their thoughts to the last supper which He had eaten with his apostles. And if in the mean time they had all forsaken Him and fled, if on this very occasion they had shewn how little they understood of his divine nature, how seasonably must He now have satisfied them that He was willing to overlook their failings, that He took them back to be his disciples, to be beloved by Him as before, to partake of the same food at his hands, and to enjoy the same blessing from his lips!

No wonder that they reproved themselves, for their slowness of apprehension, in not knowing Him, by his exposition of the Scriptures! No wonder that they were eager to go tell their brethren, "The Lord is risen indeed." And must not we, in like manner, often be surprised, that our hearts burn not within us, as we read the very words of Christ, and hear Him expound, as with his own lips, the Scriptures that were fulfilled in Himself? How is it that we know these things, and think not of them more frequently, more affectionately? How is it that we know these things, and cherish not in our hearts a more earnest hope of heaven, a more lively love for God? When thus we feel for our own condition, let us feel also for the state of our brethren. Let us endeavour to inform them by our words and works, of what we have discovered to our own spiritual joy. Let us say to them, both with our lips, and by the more powerful argument of our lives, "The Lord is risen indeed." Let us shew forth this truth in our being dead unto sin, and in our rising again unto righteousness. Let us tell it out, by our strict attention to truth in our words, and to honesty in our dealings; by our watchfulness against envying, or slandering; against indulgence in any sinful pleasure, or excess in any allowed indulgence; by our public devotion, and by our private alms; by our gifts and by our prayers, by our words and by our works; let us tell it out both to our friends and to strangers, both to Christians at home, and to the heathen abroad, let us tell it out, that "the Lord is risen indeed."

And especially if Christ have been known to us, in the breaking of bread; if we have found increase of knowledge and faith and love, in receiving the supper of the Lord; let us make a point of winning over to that ordinance, each of us, some of our friends or neighbours, whom we think we might thus influence for good. This is the way that those societies are enlarged, which aim chiefly at some worldly advantage. Those who find in such communities pleasure or profit, draw in one by one all whom they wish to serve. Why should we not thus draw to the communion of Christ, why should we not urge to the receiving of his supper, all whom we find to be yet absent, all whom we think that they might profit by attending? Why should we not, by our counsel and entreaties, by our example, our exhortations, and our prayers, compel all whom we can influence to come in unto our Lord, that his wedding may be furnished with guests, that his house may be filled? See Matt. 22. 10. Luke 14. 23.

Christ appeareth to the eleven at Jerusalem.

36 ¹ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of air honey-comb.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 ² And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

¹ Mark 16.

² John 15. 26. Acts 1. 4.

§ 275. *How far we may not believe for joy.*

The first appearance of our Lord to the eleven, at Jerusalem, was accompanied with these words of consolation, "Peace be unto you." Thus was peace on earth amongst the things assured by the angels to mankind, when the Saviour of the world was born. See ch. 2. 14. How is it that we still have fightings and wars without, and still strife and fear within our hearts? How, if it be not that we are yet far from Christ, far from seeking after his promises, far from doing and loving his commandments? It is not easy to say why the apostles should be alarmed at thinking "that they had seen a spirit." But such is the usual frame of the human mind. Though we know that in the world of spirits the good are supreme over the evil, we seem always to apprehend some injury, from any such intercourse which we can imagine that they hold with ourselves. This must arise from our being conscious of so much sinfulness, that we cannot bear to think of meeting face to face, beings so much more holy, and pure, and good. Else to think that we see the spirit of a friend we love, would fill us with unmingled joy. And the apostles would have been as glad to see the spirit of their Lord, as they were when they discovered that it was his very body which they beheld. In proof that it was so, He both shewed them his hands and feet, marked with the nails of the cross, and He also ate in their presence "a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb." He then pointed out to them how in all that had happened, both the Scriptures and his own very words which He had spoken, were fulfilled. And the great object of the whole dispensation He explained to be, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." And yet this work was not to be commenced, till one other chief promise of the Father was fulfilled, the enduing them with "power from on high."

Of those who were blest with this sight of Jesus we here read that they "believed not for joy." This reminds us of what is said of the patriarch, when he was told that Joseph was yet alive: "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." Gen. 45. 26. Here was no wish that the tidings should be untrue, but a fear to believe, lest they should not be realized. Is this, let us now ask, is this the cause of the unbelief that still prevails amongst mankind? Is this, let us now examine, is this the cause of our own faith being faint and fruitless? Is it for joy that we believe not? Is it because we know not how to think that God has given us privileges so excellent, and has in store rewards so great? or is it not, that we know not how to wish that his word may prove true at the last, declaring as it does our iniquity so hateful, and our punishment, if we sin, so sure? Often out of fear we believe not; often out of aversion to do what faith requires. But how seldom is it for joy that our faith is wanting! How next to impossible it seems, that for joy we should be deficient in that love, which is the proper fruit of faith! Else we should still love where we are not quite sure, and obey where not quite certain; instead of failing, as many do, to obey and love, where we confess that there is no room for doubt. Henceforth let it be only out of joy that we believe not. Let it be only because we reckon the things that we believe so excellent, so desirable, so far above all that we deserve, so far beyond all that we could imagine. Let it be only for this reason, and only so far as thus we feel, let this be our only hindrance to faith; and we shall daily believe better as we know more, and as our faith increases we shall love the more.

But for this we must have power from on high. For this we must have the promise of the Father sent upon us. Only through God's grace can we either repent or believe. Only through God's grace can we have peace or joy.

Christ is carried up into heaven.

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.
 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

¹ Mark 16. 19. Acts 1. 9.

§ 276. *How we should worship Christ.*

In each of the three chief dispensations, before the law, and under the law, and in the Gospel, we have recorded one instance of ascension into heaven. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Gen. 5. 24. And this is thus explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death." Heb. 11. 5. And of Elijah we are told, that he "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." 2 Kings 2. 11. And here we read of our Saviour Christ, that it came to pass, while He was blessing his disciples, "he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Thrice then it has been seen by the eyes of men, that the form of one like themselves has vanished from the earth. Thrice has there been vouchsafed this lively proof that this world will not always be our home, that our bodies will live in other realms, with Enoch, with Elijah, and with Christ. Oh, how can we still hesitate to live for heaven, when we are thus shewn how near it is at hand! How can we still doat on trifles, when we are thus brought so close to the courts of the Most High!

See how different was the behaviour of the disciples who beheld the ascension of our Lord! See how they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God! And shall we be content with visiting his house of prayer only one day in the week? Shall we be content with praising and blessing God, once only, or twice only, in the day? No, let us here learn to pray without ceasing, to praise without intermission. Let all that we do be praise. Let all that we desire be prayer. And especially let us take a lesson from these disciples, that we should address our prayer and praise to Christ our Saviour. "They worshipped him." Let us worship Him also.

And do Thou, O Lord Jesu Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, receive our prayer! Do Thou have mercy upon us. "For Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father." (Communion Service.) "Amen." So be it, beloved Saviour! "Amen." So be it, most gracious Lord! So help us to shew forth thy glory! So make us to desire thy blessed will! So lead us out far from this world! So take us to thyself in heaven! "Amen."

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

§ 277. *That we must have a right faith in Christ.*

OF the parentage and private history of St. John we know little beyond the facts that he was one of the sons of Zebedee, and that he carried on with his father the business of a fisherman. But we thus know enough to be assured that it was impossible for him to write this Gospel without the Spirit of truth directing him. And therefore it matters little who St. John was, since it is God who here speaks to us by this apostle's mouth. It is enough for us to know that he was an apostle, and that he was an apostle whom his Lord most dearly loved. And we may be sure that whatsoever is revealed in his Gospel is most profitable for our instruction in righteousness.

This Gospel was written long after the rest. And in the meanwhile there had arisen in the Christian community doubts as to whether Christ were really God; or merely man; or something between both, which is neither; or as the truth is, both in one. But to have an effectual saving faith, it is necessary to have a right faith. And to have a right faith, it is necessary to believe the truth as it really is. It became therefore most important for the church, to be assured on divine authority, that the Saviour of the world was at once both God and man. And as the other Gospels contain certain proof that He was man of the substance of his mother, born in the world, so here we have full assurance that He was God, of the substance of his Father, begotten before the worlds. For this purpose St. John relates many of our Lord's discourses which are not found in the other Gospels. And he begins his own with a solemn declaration of the great truth which he would chiefly set forth, that the "Word was God." John 1. 1. Here then we must expect beforehand to meet with many things hard to be understood. Here we must try beforehand to awaken our attention, and to quicken our desire for divine knowledge. And these objects we can by no means so effectually promote as by earnest intercession for divine grace.

Lord help us to understand what is declared of thy nature, so as to obey what is revealed of thy will; Lord help us through faith, to see the things which are else invisible! and the things which are else impossible, Lord help us by thy grace to do!

That the Word was God.

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

¹ Gen. 1. 1.² Col. 1. 16.§ 278. *How there is in Christ the light of men.*

"In the beginning was the Word." By "the Word" St. John here means our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And by this name we may conceive it to be signified, that through the Son, and through his good offices, God has made Himself known unto mankind. For language is the means of our communication with each other. And words are what help us to make known our thoughts to those we live with; to inform and to be informed ourselves. Thus Christ has been to man, "the Word." Thus Christ has been the Word of God. He has been God speaking to man. He has made known to man, for good, all that it is good for man to know of God.

And this Word was "in the beginning." At the very time of which we are told in the book of Genesis, by Moses, that God then "created the heavens and the earth," Gen. 1. 1, at that season St. John here tells us that the "Word" already "was." "In the beginning," in this expression these two writers of revelation agree. "In the beginning," before any thing that now is, was made. But how different are their expressions in what follows! "In the beginning God created." Gen 1. 1. This is what is said of the heavens and the earth. God made them out of nothing. He said, Let them be. And they were. But even then, when they were created, "in the beginning was the Word." Not was created, but "was;" already was "with God," who created them. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God." No wonder then that the Word was "in the beginning." "The Word was God." The Word was He who created the heavens and the earth. For "in the beginning" it was God who did so: and "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

In order to make this the more plain, and to make us more sure in a matter of so deep concern for our salvation, St. John repeats in the verses following, the substance of his words: "The same was in the beginning with God." "All things were made by him." It was by his means that all created things were enabled to exist; so entirely by his means, that "without him was not any thing made that was made." And this is another way of explaining to us that He Himself was never made at all, but was one with God from all eternity. For if nothing of all things made, if nothing was made "without him," without his being a party to the making, it follows of a certainty that He Himself was not in any sense made at all, but was before all things "God of God, very God of very God." (Nicene Creed.) To this St. John adds that "in him was life." He had life in Himself, to give unto those things which were by Him made. "And the life was the light of men." That life which was in Him, that self-existence, that power to make others both live, and live for ever, that life "was the light of men." In Him was that life and light which made man become a living soul, which might have saved Adam, and all his offspring, from the darkness of sin and death. And afterwards when they have fallen into that darkness, even in their state of corruption and offence, "the light shineth." There was seen, or there might be seen, in the blessed Son, "the light of men," a light to guide them into the way of peace. "And the darkness comprehended it not." Many men would not profit by the light of Christ; neither before the Law, nor under the Law, nor in the dispensation of the Gospel. What a fearful consideration is this! What a lively conception does darkness here convey of the world, or of the soul, when ignorant of Christ! To see nothing, this is darkness. To be on the very edge of endless misery, to have the pit yawning at our feet, and not to behold it, not to know it, this is darkness. To live after the flesh, and to have no notion how much better it is to live after the spirit, to be idle, and not to know that diligence is better, to be angry, and not to know the comfort of meekness, gentleness, and peace, to be at variance with conscience and with God, and to be ignorant that there is in Christ Jesus reconciliation with the Father, and not only peace, but also joy for the souls of the redeemed; this is darkness. This is the darkness in which we all exist by nature. This is the darkness which would not, if it could, comprehend the light of Christ.

Oh that God may make to shine in the darkness of our souls "the Sun of righteousness!" Mal. 4. 2. Oh that in these most difficult of his doctrines his Spirit may be unto our feeble apprehension "a light that shineth in a dark place." 2 Pet. 1. 19. Oh that He may make us receive into our hearts with joy the gracious words of the prophet, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Is. 90. 1.

The offices of John the Baptist and of Christ.

6 ¹ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and ² the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name :

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 ³ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

¹ Matt. 3. 1.

² Heb. 11. 3.

|| Or, the right, or privilege.

³ Matt. 1. 16.

§ 279. *How we must become sons of God.*

Before the beginning of the ministry of Christ, there had appeared in Judæa another preacher of repentance; and there was some danger that men might be perplexed in their minds as to which was the true Messiah. St. John therefore here tells us who the Baptist was, in the midst of his account of the divinity of Christ. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." How different are these words from the account given of our Lord Himself! How well suited are these opposite descriptions to convince us, that whilst the one was no less than a divine Person, the other was his minister and messenger. It was the great object of John's ministry to make that of Christ more strictly credible, more widely believed. "He was not that Light," not the Light of which the Apostle had just before been speaking, "but was sent to bear witness of that Light." It was his business to make all who heard and all who at this present time hear of Him, most sure that Jesus was the Christ, and that Christ was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

By this comparison of our Saviour with the Baptist St. John signifies that he was a Light to mankind, in a sense different from that in which any other Prophet may be said to give light to our minds; in such a sense as that there is no one human being whatsoever, no man born into the world, who does not derive from Christ the light of life. But further, besides life, and besides all that makes this life valuable, He came also to give the offer of eternity. He came, though He was truly the Son of God, in the form of the Son of man. "He was in the world," that very world which was "made by him;" "and the world knew him not." He came to that very people who had been set aside for his own, who had been prepared by the Law and the Prophets for his coming; "And his own received him not." Strange, that when He came on an errand so gracious, any, and above all "his own," should not receive Him! And is it not alike strange that any should not receive Him now? and is it not true of many who now receive Him not, that they are in like manner by covenant, his own? Have they not been baptized into his faith? Do they not enjoy the use of his word, the teaching of his ministers in the church? And is not the reason of their not receiving Him the same as it was of old, "because of unbelief!" Heb. 3. 19.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." He made them not sons by force. But he gave them power to become sons by the choice which He allowed them, by the grace which He obtained for them. Sons we may thus become of God, by believing on the name of Christ. Sons we may thus become, not by any inheritance from each other, not by any will of our own; but by that new birth unto righteousness, which is the gift of God to man, through Christ Jesus. And in order that we might thus become sons of God, it pleased God to become for us the Son of man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He abode in fashion as a man, in this very earth on which we live. "And we beheld his glory." So at least the apostle could say literally. And so we, through his account of it, may say, by faith. Let us then strive to see it. Let us pray, and endeavour, to discern that grace and truth, which are manifest in Christ Jesus, to all who are disposed to receive Him. Let us believe so as to love what we already know. Let us love, and we shall both know better, and believe more.

Here we have our Christian privileges traced partly to what we do ourselves, and partly to what God does for us. In order to become sons it is plain that we must receive Christ. This seems to be our doing. And yet we are told in the same sentence that it is Christ who gives us "power to become the sons of God." This would seem to ascribe the whole to his giving. But to whom is this power given by Christ? "To them that believe on his name." Here we see how greatly our believing is concerned. And yet our believing is not altogether ours. For believers are born, and belief also is engendered, not "of the will of man, but of God." And thus the matter is described in other passages of Scripture. So that we are bound to conclude upon the whole, that we must strive as diligently as if all depended upon our own exertion; and that we must pray and give thanks, in all humility, as if all were the gift of God.

The testimony of John.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

¹ Col. 1. 19.

² 1 John 4. 12. 1 Tim. 6. 16.

³ Matt. 3. 3.

|| Or, a prophet.

⁴ Matt. 3. 11. Acts 19. 4.

§ 280. *That we must not think too highly of ourselves.*

John the Baptist bare witness of our Lord, and cried, saying, "This was he of whom I spake." He said this frequently, aloud, and in public; pointing openly to Jesus of Nazareth, that this was that divine Person, whose messenger he professed himself to be. And the Evangelist adds further, for himself and the apostles, that they had experienced the truth of his being Christ, having received "of his fulness," and "grace for grace." That is to say, they had "tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 Pet. 2. 3. In addition to the witness of John beforehand, they could give their own testimony afterwards to the fact. They had actually partaken in the benefits of "God" "manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. 3. 16. They had enjoyed the grace and truth which "came by Jesus Christ." And unto them had the Father been by Him declared, to the everlasting comfort of their souls. This St. John calls "grace for grace;" meaning probably the grace of the New Testament, instead of that of the Old. For as there was a "righteousness which is in the law," Philipp. 3. 6, and a "righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," Rom. 3. 22; and two kinds also of adoption, see Rom. 9. 4, and Gal. 4. 5; and two kinds of glory, see 2 Cor. 3. 11; so there were likewise two kinds of grace, that which was under the elder covenant, and that which was under the newer covenant.

This testimony of John was given, not only to the people who crowded to hear him in the wilderness, but to the priests and Levites, who were sent purposely from Jerusalem, to learn whether He were or were not the Christ. At a time when many were looking out for the coming of Messiah, John of his own accord, when merely asked, "Who art thou?" "confessed and denied not: but confessed, I am not the Christ." So also he assured them that he was not Elias, whom they expected at that time to appear in person on the earth: nor yet "that prophet," meaning him, whom Moses had described, as to be hereafter raised up like unto himself. See Deut. 18. 15. Far from being the Christ, he was his messenger; one sent on purpose to prepare his way. Far from pretending to be the Christ, he spake ever of another greater than himself; he told those, whom he baptized with water, that there stood among them One, whom they knew not, who coming after him was to be preferred before him, whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

In these answers of John, in his anxiety not to be taken for any greater than he was, what a lesson have all Christian ministers, that they never should usurp their Master's place! What a lesson have their people, not to look for, at their hands, any such help as they are not authorized to give! What a warning against leaning on the ministry of men, as if they personally, and not Christ through their means, were the fountain of knowledge and of truth! What a warning against saying in their hearts, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos;" 1 Cor. 1. 12; against cherishing too fond attachment for the best of ministers, or failing to respect in the worst, the ordinance of their divine Master!

And further we may learn the obligation which lies on every man, not to think of himself, and not to let others think of him, more highly than is due. "Who art thou?" is a question often put to us by the world, an inquiry often made by our friends and neighbours; and one which we are often tempted to answer by the semblance of being better than we are. "Who art thou?" is a question we should put often to ourselves, for our own conviction of our own unworthiness. "Who art thou?" is a question which will be put to us ere long, by Him who best knows how little we can say justly in reply. Never let us now answer it out of vain self love; that we may not then have to hear it in shame and sorrow. Never let us now too confidently profess, I am what a Christian should be; that we may not then be compelled, with confusion of face, to acknowledge "I am not."

Further testimony of John.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 ¹ And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

|| Or, beareth.

¹ Matt. 3. 16.

‡ Or, the anointed.

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, † the Christ.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, § A stone.

* Or, abidest.

† That was two hours before night.

§ Or, Peter.

§ 281. *One important use of Christian names.*

The Jews were, we know, accustomed to the sacrifice of lambs by way of atonement for offences against the Law. How then ought they to have understood St. John saying of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" how, but that Jesus was to be a sacrifice, not for their sins only, or for sins against their Law, but for all the sins of all mankind? And so St. John writes in his first Epistle, 2. 2: "he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Notwithstanding He came unto John for baptism. For it was when John saw "Jesus coming unto him," that he bare this witness to the truth. He came to him, as we learn from the other Gospels to be baptized of him. Would that there were amongst us more of likeness unto Christ, in this humble reverence for divine ordinances! What though he that teaches be less learned or devout than his hearers, more fit perhaps in some things to learn of them; yet does the appointment of God, where they have his appointment to shew, oblige them to wait on his ministry, even as Christ on that of John the Baptist.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" To how many are these words addressed in vain! How many refuse to see in Jesus of Nazareth one that taketh away the sin of the world! "Behold the Lamb of God!" How many, even of those who heard John speak these words, neglected to follow Jesus! It is not a better opportunity, but a more willing heart, that we are in need of. It is not to hear with our ears, or to see with our eyes; but to believe, to be persuaded of what we cannot see, because God has told us. This was the frame of mind of those two disciples, who at the word of John "followed Jesus." Of these, one is with good reason supposed to have been the writer of this Gospel. And the other we read gave proof of the reality of his faith, by bringing also his brother Simon unto Jesus. This shews whether we are thoroughly convinced: do we labour for the conviction of those we love? How can we believe that heaven is at hand and not earnestly entreat them to lay up their treasure there? How can we know that hell is prepared for the wicked, and yet suffer in a brother any wilful sin? Surely if we have felt deeply our own peril, we shall not refrain from warning of their danger our kindred, and friends, and acquaintances. If we have found in Christ Jesus the hope of safety, we shall not fail to point to Him their chief attention, and to proclaim to their everlasting comfort, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

And here let us observe how, when Jesus beheld Simon, He straightway gave him a new name. "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." Thy name shall be one that signifies the resolution of thy character, thy zeal, strength, courage, and perseverance. Thus also, in the Old Testament, Jehovah said to the father of the faithful: "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham: for a father of many nations have I made thee." Gen. 17. 5. And in like manner He called Jacob also by the new name of Israel. See Gen. 35. 10. And in every case it seems to have been intended, that the name should be a memorial of the benefit imparted, of the character conferred. Let it thus with us in our names given to us in our baptism. Let them remind us, each time we are addressed by them, of the vows by which we then became bound. Let them be to us a token that we should never "be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but that we manfully should fight, under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants, unto our live's end." (See Office for Baptism.)

Christ commendeth Nathanael.

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom ¹ Moses in the law, and the ² prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

¹ Gen 49. 10. Deut. 18.¹⁸

² Is. 4. 2.

§ 282. *How we should have in us no guile.*

Here we have a second case, where the calling of one disciple leads at once to his exerting himself in winning over another. Jesus "findeth Philip." "Philip findeth Nathanael." And again we may observe upon the importance of this principle, for the propagating of the Christian faith. Have we then become deeply convinced of the necessity of caring for the soul? Have we become persuaded that Jesus Christ is the only name given under heaven, whereby we may be saved? See Acts 4. 12. Have we felt, under the belief of our forgiveness through Him, have we felt our love glow within us towards all mankind? And why then have we not cast about to communicate to some other the fruit of our own lively impressions? How know we but that some Nathanael is at hand, waiting only for us to find him that he may be brought to the knowledge of the truth? How can we help longing to make our neighbours partakers of that faith and grace which has given ourselves the sure hope of heaven? How can we help earnestly inviting them, in the words of Philip to Nathanael, "Come and see?"

This, let us remember, is the most valuable argument for conversion of the unbelieving; experience. This is the only trial which can be relied on, to confute the gainsayer; experience. "Come and see," is the answer we should give to all, who ask either with their lips or their lives, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see." Try by experience. Not only weigh the reasoning about the evidences of the Gospel, but make the experiment of living by its rules. Live it; and you will soon believe it. Live as far as now you know; as far as by God's help, you now may attain. Ask daily for more help to live more according to the truth. And you will thus find little difficulty in knowing and believing it. "Come and see," whether temperance be not better than excess, purity than lasciviousness, truth than falsehood, charity than revenge. "Come and see," and try whether the help that is of the Lord, be not stronger than that of man; whether the new Gospel motives, of thankfulness and love for redemption through Christ, be not more able to draw the heart to obedience, than all desire of the praise of this world, or even the fear of the terrors of the next.

The difficulty, which Nathanael made about believing, was no impediment to his receiving the approbation of Christ, for it arose, probably, from his having read in the Scriptures that Christ should be born at Bethlehem. In his objection there was therefore no guile. There was no secret resolution not to be convinced; but an honest intention to prove all things, and hold fast that which should be proved to be good. See 1 Thess. 5. 21. And how signal is the praise which he received! "An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" A heart without deceit is a true token of a child of God; is the genuine disposition of that true Israel, of whom God has significantly declared, "Jacob have I loved." Rom. 9. 13. In our state of natural corruption how continually are we inclined to deceive, either our neighbour or ourselves; how anxious often to deceive, if it might be, God! To withhold nothing from Him, of all we do amiss, this is true confession; this is genuine repentance. To conceal nothing from ourselves, this takes off the veil from our own hearts, shews us our own lost estate, and leads us to the hope of salvation through Christ. In nothing to deceive our neighbour; this is to prefer the fear of God to the fear of man, the praise of God to the praise of man: and this is the way to honour God, and to be by Him hereafter honoured. Thus shall we also "see heaven open." We shall feel how, through the intercession of our Lord, our prayers thither ascend, and how, through his merits, there thence come down the manifold gifts of grace. Such is the fruit of sincerity in our prayers! Such is the profit of praying, when the heart desires what the lips express! But what else but guile can those prayers be counted, which are repeated without devotion, without attention of the thoughts, without affection of the soul? And how can they who thus pray, thus think, thus feel, how can these hope to see heaven open; when all the while both their eyes and hearts are fixed upon the things of earth?

Christ turneth water into wine.

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and

bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

§ 283. *That God keeps the best till last.*

The presence of our Lord among the company at this feast, and his turning the water into wine, may serve to shew, that under the Christian dispensation, such festivities, within due limits, are allowable. Else He, who countenanced no sin, would not have wrought on a festive occasion "this beginning of miracles;" would not have chosen this wedding for the time of so manifesting his glory, that "his disciples believed on him." Let us thankfully acknowledge this divine sanction both for marriage, and for the cheerful festivity with which marriage is commonly accompanied. But let us at the same time take heed that our enjoyments never degenerate into sin; that our feasting never end in excess; that our marrying, if we be married, never lead to that kind of love for wife or husband, which is inconsistent with due love for Christ. Earthly enjoyments must be used with thankfulness, or we might seem to slight the Giver of all good. But they must be used also with watchfulness, or they will be turned to our destruction, by the author of all evil. Let us beware then that in our festivity on all festive occasions, there be no commission of sin, no transgression of the will of God. Let us be watchful against such mirth as is akin to levity, against such indulgence as amounts to excess. Let us be sure that we do nothing to draw down upon our heads the woe which is denounced by the prophet, against those who in their feasts have "the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine;" "but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." Is. 5. 12.

The mother of Jesus appears to have expected that He would take some part in supplying the wine which was wanted at the feast. And when his reply rather signified the contrary, she still enjoined the servants to obey his directions. This probably arose from her having kept in her heart, as St. Luke tells us, all the sayings relating to her Son. See Luke 2. 51. His reply, and the word "woman," with which He addressed her, though consistent with due respect for his mother, are utterly inconsistent with that almost divine honour which is paid to the Virgin Mary by the Church of Rome. And this it is important for us to notice. Because the more we are impressed with the duty of being all of one mind in religion, the more we shall feel anxious to be satisfied, as to the grounds on which our own beloved church stands aloof from the Romish communion.

"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water." How strange, how useless, must this command have seemed to the servants, who were in want not of water, but of wine! Let us learn to obey in whatever God commands, though we cannot understand the reason, and we shall often enjoy the benefit, where we had no expectation of advantage. "And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast." It was the office of the governor both to bless the cup of wine, and to taste it before it was handed to the company. And it was a natural remark for him to make that "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." And this testimony to the excellency of the wine, serves to prove the reality of the miracle. But further, this remark should remind us of one important point in which God's dealings, in the gifts of his providence and grace, are opposite to the ordinary conduct of mankind. He reserves always the best to be the last. His ways are not our ways. Harvest He gives after toil, wisdom after painful study, the Gospel not till after the Law, heaven not till after a sojourn upon earth. Let us not then be disheartened, if we have many things to suffer during the time of our pilgrimage. God has in store for us far better things than we know of or imagine. He has kept for us till after death the being free from pain, free from care, free from strife, free from sin. He has kept for us, till after death, to weep no more, to dwell in the light of his countenance for ever.

Give us then, Lord, the best at the last! Here let us enjoy thy grace! Hereafter let us share thy glory! Here let us live content to suffer, hereafter make us joyfully to reign!

Christ cleanseth the temple ; foresheweth his resurrection.

13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting :

15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables ;

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, ' The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ?

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, ' Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days ?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

25 And needed not that any should testify of man : for he knew what was in man.

¹ Ps. 69. 9.

² Matt. 26. 61.

§ 284. *That we are the temple of Christ.*

At the approach of the passover "Jesus went up to Jerusalem," having stayed as we have read lately, "not many days," with his mother and brethren and disciples at Capernaum. So little did He enjoy of that rest and comfort which home alone can yield ! So forcibly does He teach us, by his example, that here we have no real home, but only a lodging for a time, on our road to a better country ! On entering the temple, He found it crowded with those, who sold oxen and sheep, for the use of persons sacrificing, and with those who changed money, for the use of Jews from foreign parts who resorted to the feast. The turning of these people out of the temple, and the reason our Lord assigned for so doing, may serve to warn us against profaning our own places of worship by any such admixture of worldly business. "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise," these are words which will apply to any secular transactions for which we are tempted by convenience to make use of the church. The building and the hours which are set apart for divine worship, have been found suitable, by reason of the resort of the people, for giving notice of things utterly irrelevant. Let us take care that we never suffer our attention to be distracted by what is thus made public. Instead of bringing our worldly business into our minds in church, let it serve to remind us, that we ought to carry into the world the spirit of that service which we go to church to perform.

And here further it may be observed, that this purifying of the temple was a miracle of a very singular and convincing nature. A man of peace, unarmed, unassisted, and, as was supposed, unauthorized, makes a scourge of small cords, by way of signifying his resolution to chastise, as rebellious children, the people who disobeyed his Father's will. He enters into the temple, now a crowded market. He clears it of men, and sheep, and oxen. He tramples under foot the idol of these worshippers, the money they so dearly loved. What power but the majesty of the divine presence, what force but the arm of the Most High, can account for the discomfiture of this numerous assemblage ? How fearful then will that presence be hereafter found, when He shall purge out of this wicked world all things that offend ; when He shall say to them upon the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !" Matt. 25. 41.

The Jews, surprised at this interference of our Lord, asked Him what sign He had to shew, by way of proof of his authority. His answer, as St. John here informs us, related to his resurrection from the dead. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews supposed Him to speak of the building in which they were then assembled. But as He meant in reality his own body, so He would have us hence to understand that the temple, which is fitting for God's service, is the body which is subject to his will ; even Christ's, which is given to die upon the cross ; even ours, which must like his be crucified, by selfdenial and holiness of life. His temple we are ourselves ; our souls and bodies are dedicated to his service. To Him therefore, let us take pains to keep them sacred, by a holy practice, by a lively faith. For see how different is the faith of the outward profession, from the faith of the hearty believer ! To "many" who on this occasion "believed in his name" Jesus did not commit Himself, "for he knew what was in man." So easy is it in some sense to believe, and yet to be unfit for Christ to trust. They only believe aright who live according to their belief. And they only live aright whose life is founded on their faith. Let us remember both in our life and in our faith, that Christ knows what is within our hearts. Let us, like the disciples, remember what is written in the Scriptures. Let us with Christ have that zeal for God's honour, which would consume in us all sinful sloth, all sinful fear ; which would make us both in soul and body a temple worthy to be called our "Father's house."

Christ teacheth Nicodemus.

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews :

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born *||* again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

|| Or, from above.

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born *†* again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

† Or, from above.

§ 285. *The Christian new birth.*

Jesus, as we learn in the last chapter, ver. 24, "did not commit himself" at the first to those who professed belief in his name. Yet He explains to Nicodemus some of the chief new doctrines of the Gospel. He, who "knew what was in man," ch. 2. 25, knew doubtless that there was in this ruler of the Jews a heart disposed to learn and to obey. And such was the purport of the profession with which he came to our blessed Lord. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." We, the rulers of the Jews, have no doubt that what Thou sayest is God's word, for this reason, that thy works are God's works, "no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Thus did Nicodemus own to a firm conviction on sufficient grounds. And though his coming by night was probably done out of fear of the other rulers, who came not, yet his coming at all, under such circumstances, was a proof that his profession was in earnest.

See then how our Lord encourages the timid to advance, if only they truly turn to Him! See what an important and appropriate doctrine He first presses on the attention of Nicodemus! To be "born again," to be "born of water and of the Spirit;" this he must know was necessary for his entering into the kingdom of God. It was not enough for him to come to Jesus by night. He must openly confess himself convinced, by submitting to be baptized with water; he must have that change, of which baptism is the sign and seal, wrought by the Spirit in the heart. As a ruler in Israel he should have remembered that baptism was used to signify the being a proselyte to a new religion. And he would not then have fallen into the mistake of supposing that a natural birth was here meant. If we remember that this change is the being born of the Spirit, we shall understand how it may easily take place, even in those who are baptized in infancy. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." A new birth such as the ruler thought of, would not make a man less truly carnal. But "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That which is wrought in us by God's Spirit is a change in the condition of the soul. It is a change from a state of enmity with God, to a state of salvation through Christ. It is a change from a state of utter incapacity for good, to a state of fitness for grace. It is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." It is that we "being by nature born in sin, the children of wrath, are hereby made the children of grace." (Catechism.)

This is not a change that can be discerned by man, such as the change from indifference to love, which takes place in the contrite sinner, or the progress from strength to strength, which is the very life of the confirmed disciple. No; rather as the wind cannot be seen, though its effects are felt, as we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell "whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The change is in the condition of the soul. The change is wrought by Him who made the soul; and who gives to it by his grace, at its new birth, a new existence. And this takes place we know not how; we see not, we feel not when. Only we are assured that it does take place; and that the outward sign of baptism is the seal of its having been done by God. Let us not further ask with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" Let us be content to know that thus they are. Let us be mindful that we have been thus born again. Let us be careful to lead the rest of our lives according to this beginning. Our bodies are as those of other men. Our souls have undergone a new birth. How much more full of glory is our hope! How much more sure, if we sin wilfully, is our condemnation! Oh, how can we be enough watchful with such a charge entrusted! How can we be enough thankful with such a gift conferred!

God grant that all, who have been thus born anew, may lead the new life of holiness and love! God grant that all who have been thus "born of the Spirit," may live no longer to the flesh, nor fulfil the lusts thereof! God grant that thus living according to their new birth, and dying according to their new life, they may enter at death into his heavenly kingdom, there to live with Him for ever!

Christ telleth Nicodemus of heavenly things.

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 ¹ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 ² For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him

should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 ³ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, ⁴ that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be || reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

¹ Numb. 21. 9.

² 1 John 4. 9.

³ ch. 12. 47.

⁴ ch. 1. 4.

|| Or, *discovered*.

§ 286. *How we ought to come to the light.*

In any difficulty of religion, when we would ask, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" verse 9. let us first consider well these words of Christ: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Christians are to take divine truth on the testimony of God's word. We are to believe, not because we understand how these things can be, but because we feel satisfied that Christ has said they are. And this we must do, both in the "earthly things" of which our Lord first told Nicodemus, things relating to our own state in this world, the change we have here to undergo, the new birth we have here to be born; and also in regard to heavenly things, such as next our Lord discoursed on, namely, his own coming down from heaven, how it was owing to the love of God that He died for the sins of men, and how in his death it was designed, "that the world through him might be saved."

These things we may suppose our Lord to have called heavenly, because they relate to those counsels in the mind of God, which are far above, out of our reach. How the Son at once "is in heaven," and "came down from heaven;" how his being lifted up on the cross is as effectual to the saving of the souls of men, as the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness was to the healing of their bodies; how the justice of the Father has been satisfied by the death of his sinless Son; how his mercy induced Him to give his Son for this wicked world; how it comes to pass that faith in Christ is of such efficacy that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" how all this was done for the saving of the world, and yet the world notwithstanding is still condemned; all these things are "heavenly;" all these things are far above our comprehension; of all these we are probably tempted to inquire, "How can these things be?" But in all we must be contented with this answer of our Lord, namely, that He has told us that which He actually knew, and testified that which He had seen.

It is for us to receive his witness. And this receiving of his witness is belief. And the fruits of this believing are, on the one hand, that we are not condemned; on the other, that we do the truth, and that doing it, we come forward of ourselves unto the light, that our deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. What a striking description have we here of the nature of the Christian life! What a guide for our improvement! What a test for our self examination! Do we come to the light? Have we pleasure in coming to it? Are our lives such as are according to the light of God's word? Are they such as we should be willing at any hour to submit to the bright light of future judgment? Do we desire now to make manifest that we do them out of the love of Christ, out of the hope of heaven? Are we ready for them to be made manifest hereafter, in the conviction that they will then prove to have been wrought in God? If not; if we still fear instead of hoping and loving, must not this be the reason that we are not doing "the truth," not living as God would have us, doing evil, and therefore hating the light. Nothing seems to be more rare than to love the light. Nothing would so greatly help to our increase in well doing. Nothing is so well done as what is done in love, as what is done out of a hearty good will to man, and out of a devout affection towards God: This is the way He would have us to obey Him; not to obey grudgingly or of necessity, but to obey cheerfully and devotedly; not to obey, as if we had rather serve sin if we durst, but as if we would not serve Satan if we safely might.

God give us to have pleasure in well doing! God give us to be aware that our good works are his! God make us to have joy in the thought, that what we do must one day be brought to light! God make us to love the light rather than darkness, to believe in his blessed Son, and through Him to be not condemned, but saved!

Further testimony of John to Christ.

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa: and there he tarried with them, ¹and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, ²to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.

27 John answered and said, ³A man can || receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ⁴I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but

the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33 He that hath received his testimony ⁵hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.

35 ⁶The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36 ⁷He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

¹ ch. 4. 2.

² ch. 1. 7, 34.

³ Heb. 5. 4.

|| Or, *take unto himself*.

⁴ ch. 1. 20.

⁵ Rom. 3. 4.

⁶ Matt. 11. 27.

⁷ Heb. 2. 4. 1 John 5. 10.

§ 287. *How we should allow the precedency of others.*

We read here that Jesus baptized in the land of Judæa. Afterwards in the next chapter, ver. 2, it is mentioned that "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." And this is not uncommon in the Scriptures, to describe a thing as done by any one, when it is done by those whom he employs. So that here we have two passages, which at first appear at variance, easily shewn to be consistent with each other. And hence we should be on our guard in any similar case, and not doubt but that the things, which at first seem difficult, are in reality both plain and strictly true. And further we should hence learn, to consider whatever is done in this sort by the authority of Christ, to be all one as though it were done by Christ Himself. If his disciples baptize, if his apostles, or those whom his apostles ordained, or those whom they appointed in their turn, if these authorized ministers of the Gospel either baptize, or preach, or pray, or impart to his faithful flock the communion of his blessed body and blood, it is Christ that ministers; it is his ordinance that takes effect, the blessing which ensues is of his giving; and unto Him must be ascribed the honour and the thanks.

Our Lord having thus taken into use the like outward rite of baptism as John, there arose a question between the disciples of the two teachers, a question about purifying, about washing in water, about baptism, which of these baptisms was the most profitable, which of the two ought in preference to be received. St. John, as well became him, being in the lower place, gave testimony of himself that he was so. He reminded his disciples that he had said, "I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him." He described himself as being only the friend of the bridegroom, but Jesus as him that had the bride. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Not only am I now lower, but I must continue to be lowered in the comparison; my baptism, and my doctrine, and myself, being earthly, whilst He and his are heavenly. Here we have a notable example for our conduct, if any question of precedency arise, and it be our duty to take the lowest place. Let us be careful that we do it of ourselves. Let us be sure that we never force upon those, to whom the highest should be given, the invidious office of assuming it. Let us consider, that though each ought to think lowly of himself, some are, and also must be set higher than the rest. Let us bear always willing testimony to those who are so. Let us be as glad to uphold their precedency, as we should be willing to yield up our own.

When One that was so highly exalted had come down from heaven, and testified what He had "seen and heard," how grievous was the record set forth by John, that "no man receiveth his testimony!" Few only, out of the many who heard his words, were inclined to believe their truth! For that some did believe, is signified in what follows: "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." The faith of believing Christians does honour to divine truth, whilst it secures their own salvation. It justifies the wisdom of the Gospel dispensation, whilst it avails to the inheritance of everlasting life. Such is the fruit of Christian faith. Such is the nature of Christian love. We must have regard at once to God, and to ourselves; not to our present ease, but to our eternal welfare; not only to our own salvation, but to the glory of God our Saviour.

God grant that we may receive the testimony of Christ! God grant that we may believe in his Son! God grant that we may have everlasting life, and may set to our seal that He is true! God grant that as we have been "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," Eph. 1. 13, 14, so we may in the end be sealed, as servants of God, See Rev. 7. 3, and saved from the wrath to come!

Christ teacheth a woman of Samaria.

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

3 He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground ¹ that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which

am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

¹ Gen. 33. 19. and 48. 22. Josh. 24. 32.

§ 288. *How those who have been at variance should help each other.*

“When the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,” it became probable that they would attempt to destroy Him before the time. He therefore “left Judæa, and departed again unto Galilee.” And it was as He journeyed for this purpose by the city of Sychar that He met with the woman of Samaria. Thus the apprehended enmity of the Jews threw Christ into conversation with the Samaritans. The malice of the Pharisees ministered an occasion for his kindness to be extended to these outcasts of Israel. And the very fatigue arising from his journey, led to his giving rest unto one, who laboured and was heavy laden with the burden of sin. “Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well,” sat as one that is weary sits; sat as one desirous to rest, and yet willing and ready in the midst of his repose to labour, either by word or work, for good. “There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water.” This was one of those common occurrences, which our Lord delighted to connect with his lessons of divine instruction. By which means He made his teaching more familiar and plain. And He hallowed also these circumstances for our improvement, to suggest to us continually the use He made of them. Never may we henceforth see water drawn, without reflecting on the humility of Him, who thus asked of a woman that was a Samaritan, “Give me to drink;” without thinking of that living water, which Christ alone can give.

The woman marvelled how it could happen that one who was a Jew, should condescend to ask her assistance; “for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” Let us learn from our Lord's conduct, if there be any with whom we have been at variance, that we should not be above receiving assistance from them, much less be reluctant to assist. The woman's answer expressed her reluctance to comply with his gracious request. Upon which He told her how different her behaviour would have been, if she had known who it was that addressed her. Not only would she have given readily, but also have asked eagerly; and asking she would have received living water. How differently should we oftentimes receive the request preferred to us by our brethren, if we did but duly consider who it is, that in them applies to us! It is Christ, who in the hungry, the naked, and the fatherless, demands our aid. It is Christ to whom we give each cup of cold water, that we bestow for his sake on one of the least of his disciples. Never then must we answer any, thus applying, without expression of Christian kindness. Never must we dismiss any, whom we know to be in want, without helping them according to our ability. Rather we must ask of them, ask of Him who in them applies to us. We must, seek, by their means, to gain help of Him. We must endeavour, out of the mammon of unrighteousness, to make to ourselves friends, who when we fail will receive us into everlasting habitations. See Luke 16. 9.

What kind of water our Lord here meant He explains by saying in what follows: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” That is to say, he shall never thirst in the life which is to come. For here, those to whom Christ giveth of his grace, hunger and thirst so much the more after righteousness. But for all who so thirst it is appointed that “they shall be filled.” Matthew 5. 6. And here we see what they shall be filled with; “a well of water springing up into everlasting life;” a draught of those heavenly gifts, which, like water, at once cleanse outwardly, and refresh within; which flow without ceasing, fill without cloying, and endure without end. These, if we will but ask, He will give. How then, if we know this gift of God, how is it that we refrain from asking?

Christ revealeth Himself to the woman of Samaria.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in ¹ Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

¹ Deut. 12. 5.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 ² God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The women then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

² 2 Cor. 3. 17.

§ 289. *That we must worship God in spirit and in truth.*

The woman of Samaria, hearing our Lord's account of what He had to bestow, asked saying, "Give me this water;" and expected in her ignorance that she would then no more thirst, no more have occasion to go to the well and draw. "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither." To be convinced of sin is necessary, before we can duly comprehend the way of eternal life. And therefore our Lord directs her attention to the chief of her sins, the having had so many husbands, some probably during the life time of the others, so that the one she then had was not her husband. And by thus opening to her his knowledge of her sinfulness, He convinced her that He was a prophet sent from God, and inclined her to listen to his teaching. If we find in the Gospel a faithful picture of our own corrupt condition, let us be the more inclined to search into it for an account of how we may be healed. If we hear from Christ a true statement of our many and grievous sins, let us be the more persuaded to ask of Him how we may be forgiven for the past, how we may serve God for the future.

The chief thing of which this woman inquired was one then much disputed between the Jews and the Samaritans: which was the right place of worship. To seek for satisfaction in a controverted point, proves often in the inquirer, not a love of disputing, but a conviction that the truth is of importance, and a lively desire to believe aright. In his answer our Lord informed her that a time was then at hand, in which no weight would any longer be attached to worshipping in any mountain or city; but that true worshippers all over the world should worship the Father "in spirit and in truth." Let this then be our rule of devotion; and our reason this, that "God is a spirit." He is One who seeth not only that which is without, but also that which is within. There then in our hearts let us pay Him honour, there pray as to Him there hearing us, there give thanks as He would have us, there believe as He has revealed Himself unto us. "In spirit," not in mere vain profession. "In spirit," not in lifeless form. "And in truth," not only with zeal, but with a faith that is correct, in the very method that is laid down for us in the Scriptures; and after the order that has been adopted by the church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth," 1 Tim. 3. 15.

"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." What a positive assertion have we here of this great truth of the Gospel, that Jesus is the Christ. How came it to pass that He, who would not commit Himself to any of the Jews, see ch. 2. 24, thus openly revealed Himself to a woman that was a Samaritan and a sinner? This must have been by reason of her humility and her faith. She believed beforehand that Christ would be able to tell her all things. She received without a murmur his testimony against her sins. She proclaimed without delay to the neighbours her discovery of the Christ, and how He had told her all her deeds. She was more careful to declare his glory than to conceal her own shame. The more we humble ourselves, whether before God or man, Christ will the more lift us up. The more we are willing to learn, He is the more pleased to teach. The more we are desirous to teach others, He will the more make us to be ourselves wise unto salvation. Oh then let us never so much fear shame before men, as condemnation before God. Never let us be too proud to learn, never too impatient to teach. Never let us fail, in confessing our sins, to feel deep conviction of our sinfulness. Never let us neglect, when we kneel in prayer, to worship in spirit and in truth!

Christ encourageth his disciples.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

35 Say not ye, 'There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest?' behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; ¹ for they are white already to harvest.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and

another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;

42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

¹ Matt. 9. 37.

§ 290. *That we should be patient in well doing.*

Whilst the woman of Samaria had left her waterpot, and forgotten her thirst, in her zeal to ask her neighbouring citizens, "Is not this the Christ?" v. 29; "in the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat." His reply may seem to signify for Himself that He was engaged in watching for that soul which He had so lately gained over to his Father; that He was encouraging the zeal that took her back to the city; there attending on her words, to bless them to the conviction of the hearers. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." And in us, these words of his should serve to repress any anxious thought for this world's meat, and to excite a lively desire to forward our heavenly Father's will. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." This should be our reflection, when we are urged by the lovers of the world to share in the eager pursuit of wealth, or their intemperate indulgence in food. This should be our great rule of life; this the great object of all our labour; not to finish our own work, but God's; not to do our own will, but his. Then shall we never grudge or murmur, though the work we have in hand should not be by Him permitted to succeed. We are but his servants. We desire only to do what He would have us. Our plans we have laid in order to please Him. We pursue them on the principles which He has revealed. And shall we not be satisfied to leave in his hands the result? If we prosper, shall we not conclude that our success is his doing? If we fail, shall we not be content to think, that thus to fail was more for his glory, and therefore also more for our good?

And this is especially true of such work as our Lord here chiefly intended, the work of making men wise unto salvation; the work which He Himself had to do; the work which He appointed to his apostles and ministers; the work in which all Christians ought to rejoice above all other works to labour. For is it not true, that amongst ourselves the spiritual fields are "white already to harvest?" Have we not, every one of us, some within our reach, whom we might profitably admonish with the words of Christian counsel, or yet more surely reach with the influence of Christian example? Let us remember that in this harvest "he that reapeth receiveth wages." "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." James 5. 20. And herein also is that saying true, "one soweth and another reapeth." True it is, in cases where our labour may seem to fail. The seed may have been notwithstanding sown, in which "both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." And true it is in this sense also, that it is Christ who really sows that seed in the converted heart, of which if we labour in thus well doing He graciously allows us to reap the fruit.

The Samaritans at first believed in Christ for the saying of the woman. After coming to Him, and hearing Him, they remarked: "now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." These words we may profitably apply to our own Christian convictions. Much we ought to defer to testimony. Much we ought to feel that we are indebted to the witness of those, who have assured us from generation to generation that Jesus is the Christ. But much also we ought to derive from our own experience of his grace received into our souls, of his word made profitable to the amendment of our lives. This Christian experience is not indeed a thing to speak of boastfully, but it is a matter which we ought to feel deeply, and which on due occasions we ought to profess thankfully. To feel within our hearts new and strong convictions, new and holy purposes, new and heavenly help, these are gifts which we ought to ascribe with gladness to Him, through whose love alone they are received. May He give us this peace and joy in believing, this persuasion of love within ourselves, that He is indeed our Saviour from the bonds of sin and death!

Christ healeth a child sick at Capernaum.

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

44 For ¹ Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.

45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilæans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs

and wonders, ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way: thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed and his whole house.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

¹ Matt. 13. 57.

² Ch. 2. 1.

|| Or, courtier, or, ruler.

§ 291. *How we should persevere in praying.*

“Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.” And this was the reason of his going to other parts of Galilee, in preference to Nazareth, “where he had been brought up.” Luke 4. 16. This tendency to despise whatsoever we are familiar with, besets us also in the ordinances of religion; so that the better we know them, the less we shall profit by them, unless we watch to use them for our spiritual improvement. Let us be therefore on our guard against this danger. Let us be watchful, whatever we have to do repeatedly to God’s honour, as praying to Him, or listening to his word, let us be watchful that we do it each time with more of faith and of devotion, more of zeal, and of diligence, and of love. Then the more we are familiar with his dealings, we shall the more reverence Himself. The better we know our Bible or our prayers, we shall the more profit by their use.

Having been favourably received by the Galilæans, “Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee,” where He had turned water into wine. Here he was met by “a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.” To his application for help he received at first this cold reply: “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” So also God often seems to turn a deaf ear to our prayers; or at least we imagine that He does, because He grants them not as soon as we desire. Let us learn from this history to repeat them continually with so much the more of faith and fervour. “Sir, come down ere my child die.” Come, Lord, and help, that our souls perish not. Though hitherto we have prayed, as we suppose, in vain, though as yet we are not as holy and heavenly minded, as we know we ought to be, as we desire we should be; yet, Thou we believe canst heal our infirmities; come down, then, O Lord, from heaven to help, ere the soul more precious than an only child, perish everlastingly. If thus we persevere in praying, we shall be sure of receiving, in due time, the pardon and the peace we long for. Often in this present life the prayer of faith is answered by the joyful assurance imparted from above, Thy soul liveth. And whatever measure of hope we may here be blest with, our sentence is sealed for the future: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Matth. 7. 7.

“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.” He knew it to be a miracle by the exact agreement of the time. He believed in consequence of the miracle. He believed that Jesus was the Christ. And with him his whole house also believed. This is what ought to happen in each Christian family, in each Christian state. The faith of those who bear rule, should be made to influence the rest. Each in his due place and order should himself serve God devoutly; and also use all means in his power to make the rest do likewise. For what gift is there imparted from God to man, which man ought not to use to the honour of the Giver? And what talent is more evidently the gift of God, than the authority of parent over child, master over servant, or ruler over states and churches? And how shall they who are in authority answer for it hereafter, if they maintain not to the uttermost the cause of Christian truth, if they constrain not to the uttermost all those whom they can influence, to the practice of Christian holiness?

God grant that they who bear rule in this church and nation may use their authority for the maintenance of Christ’s true religion! God give grace to all who are of this household, that they may believe in Christ as the Saviour of the soul! God make us to agree in one faith, to walk by one rule of holiness and love, and hereafter to dwell together in one “building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!” 2 Cor. 5. 1.

Christ healeth one at the pool of Bethesda.

1 After ¹ this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep || market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

5 And a certain man was there, which had an

infirmity thirty and eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in *that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

¹ Lev. 23. 2. Deut. 16. 1.

|| Or, gate.

§ 292. *The healing of our spiritual infirmity.*

Many things there were of a marvellous nature in the dispensation of the Jews, which can only be explained by the manifest interference of Jehovah in the government of his chosen people. Thus angels, who still minister to the advantage of them who shall be heirs of salvation, see Heb. 1. 14, were then employed to act on the outward senses, to inflict, as when David sinned, a pestilence on the people, 2 Sam. 24. 16; or to supply as at Bethesda, health to the diseased. At this pool there were many sick, and only one was healed. In our spiritual infirmity there are many who are made whole. Yet compared with those who never reach unto the healing waters, few are they who seem to profit by them. Few are they out of all mankind who so much as know the name of Jesus Christ. Few are they out of all that know, who so much as profess to receive his faith. Few out of those who so profess, few are they who in their hearts effectually believe. Few are they who walk by faith. Few are they who obey with love. Few are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, which set their affection on things above, which count all things on earth but loss for Christ, which follow Christ even unto death. And whilst thus there are so few here saved from sin, must we not anxiously ask concerning eternal wrath, may we not rightly ask with apprehension for ourselves, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Luke 13. 23.

And yet there is demanded of us not more than was required of the man here healed; "Wilt thou be made whole?" It is not ability to do right, that is expected of us, but a willingness to be saved from doing wrong: a readiness to have wrought in us by Almighty God that which we cannot do of ourselves. A submission of our will to his will; a conviction that his way of saving us through Christ is not only all sufficient, but all wise, all good; a lively desire to be so saved, an eagerness to comply with the terms of this salvation; these are the things implied in this question put to us: "Wilt thou be made whole?" Oh, why are we so slow to answer for the soul, what we so freely assent to for the body? Why are the impotent so glad to be made strong, the blind to see, the halt to walk, the withered to be renewed in vigour; whilst the angry are so reluctant to become gentle, the malicious kind, the dishonest true, or the lascivious pure? Why are we in the one case so uniformly willing, in the other so commonly averse: especially when in the latter case, and that far the most important, to be willing is all that is required?

The fact is, that here the will is itself diseased. We are herein like this infirm man at Bethesda, who was unable to walk, and yet could only be healed by first walking, nay, by running and outrunning others, to the pool. We must be holy in order to love holiness, and in order to be holy we must first have faith. And yet we cannot believe without being inclined towards belief, without loving the things believed, and wishing them to be true. Are we then in our infirmity tempted to despond? Are we tempted to give up the hope of holiness, and thus to relax in our efforts to be holy? Let us learn to be patient and persevering in our prayers. Let us learn from one who waited thirty and eight years, at the pool of Bethesda, with so small prospect of profit by the stirring of the waters. Let us learn that God has other ways than those we think of, to give us the health we need. Let us learn from Him, who said to this sick man in his distress, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." To move is first necessary; but He can help us first to move. We must will to be made whole; but He can help us so to will. His voice has already bidden us to rise and walk; his grace can enable us to obey.

"Thirty and eight years." What a length of time was this to wait in a condition so forlorn! More than half the usual span of human life! In the heavenly healing of the soul we need not wait a single hour for its beginning, but we must wait to the end of life ere it is complete. It is begun we may hope already. But, Lord, how much is still wanting! How feebly do we yet walk in the ways of thy commandments! How do we still faintly resist temptation! How do we still cling to the sins we should forsake! How do we still greedily follow after pleasure, and carelessly search for truth! How are we still strong for evil, and how still impotent for good! Make us, for Thou alone art able, make us to rise and walk. Make us to advance from where we are, and to approach to what we should be. Make us to go on from strength to strength; even to be like to what Thou art, perfect. See Psalm 84. 7.

Christ answereth the Jews.

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: 'it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, || a multitude being in that place.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

¹ Jer. 17. 22.

|| Or, from the multitude that was.

§ 203. *The divinity of Christ.*

The Jews forbade the man who had been healed to carry his bed, as he had been directed, on the sabbath day. "He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, 'Take up thy bed, and walk.'" It seemed reasonable to conclude that one who could work so great a miracle might justly enforce a command so easy. The Jews, not content with this reply, desired to know who had wrought the miracle. And though he "that was cured" knew not at first who it was, yet afterwards, having met our Lord in the temple, he "departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole." And this we may suppose he did, not on purpose to betray one who had so greatly benefitted him, but in order to excuse himself, and without thinking of the trouble he might bring upon Jesus. Let us be watchful that in such a case as this we look not only on our own things, see Phil. 2. 4, that we consider not only our own safety or advantage; lest we injure unawares our neighbour, lest we unadvisedly betray our Lord.

And further let us listen to this his solemn charge: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." This is an exhortation, which we shall do well to call to mind, whenever we experience, through God's mercy, deliverance from any evil we have felt or feared. If we have been ill, and are now well, if we have been alarmed by the approach of danger, and now seem to have escaped in safety; let us take for the rule of our behaviour this wholesome counsel, "sin no more;" let us take for our warning these solemn words, "lest a worse thing come unto thee." How many sins have we already committed! And how many judgments have we hitherto escaped! How often have we been living in such unity with God, as must have ensured, if we had then been called away to judgment, our endless destruction! God be praised, that He has not cut us off in the midst of our transgressions! God be praised, that He has brought us to a better frame of mind whether by affliction or by joy, whether by sickness or recovery, whether by his dealings towards ourselves or towards those we love! Let us take care that we sin no more, lest there come upon us that thing, far worse than all this world's woes, eternal death.

To the Jews, who sought to slay our Lord, for his work of healing on the sabbath day, He replied: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And by this they understood Him to say that God was his Father, and to make himself equal with God. His saying we may thus interpret: Does not the Almighty Father sustain on the seventh day that world, which in the first six He made? Do not the fruits of the earth grow during the sabbath? Does not the sun on this day rise and set? Do not all living creatures on this day both draw their breath and take their nourishment? And are any of these things done without God working? And is there any thing that the Father doeth which the Son may not do likewise?

And now further to make this doctrine plain, our Lord adds, that in thus making Himself equal to the Father, He claimed no more than his due honour. For unto Him the Father in his love sheweth "all things that himself doeth;" all things, even the raising of the dead, all things, even the judging of the world. And thus it is the Father's will that He should be honoured, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Let this then be the sufficient warrant for our practice, whatever difficulty we experience in the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. We may be perplexed as to how we are to understand. We can have no doubt as to what we are to do. It is to honour the Son even as we honour the Father. It is to love, and serve, and worship Christ, as we worship, and serve, and love Almighty God.

Christ testifieth of Himself.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 And hath given him authority to execute judg-

ment also, because he is the Son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; ¹they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

¹ Matt. 25. 46.

§ 294. *The twofold resurrection.*

This passage, we should remember, is a part of our Lord's answer to the Jews, when they sought to slay Him, for saying that God was his Father. See how far He is from extenuating the force of what He had said! See how He proves at full length its truth! See in how many things He shews that He was, as they had supposed Him to signify, "equal with God!" ver. 18. These particulars we may profitably consider, not merely as justifying what our Lord has spoken, but as truths which it is of great importance for us to believe, in order to our being justified by faith in Him.

How much, for instance, is said for us, in this most consolatory promise: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life." Do we thus hear? Have we thus believed? Are we now thus passed from death unto life, from the death which we all died in Adam, to the life unto which all are made alive in Christ? Do we hope also, have we a lively hope, to pass, by the same Lord, and by faith in Him, from the death which we must die in the flesh, to the glories of life eternal? Do we watch, as we should do, for that hour, of which He here assures us that it "is coming;" an hour, "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth!" All that have died, all shall live. All that have died, all shall rise again. For this life we inherit from the second Adam, as surely as we derive through the first our present existence. And in proof of it He here told the Jews, that at the time then present the dead should hear his "voice, and live;" meaning those whom He raised from the dead, and those who on his dying arose from the grave. And this He tells them should be no marvel, compared with what would happen at the hour yet to come, when all should rise to live for ever. This life He has imparted to all; this hope He has set forth to all. And yet strange to say, all do not gladly receive it, all will not enjoy its fulfilment. There will indeed be a "resurrection of life;" but there will be also a "resurrection of damnation." At the same hour, when all that are in the graves shall come forth, there will be some appointed to one condition, and some to the other; some sentenced to endless misery, as well as some to everlasting joy. And which they be, will be settled by no arbitrary choice, but by an exact and righteous judgment. And the very Son, through whom we hope for our everlasting inheritance, He will be at that day our Judge. For the Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." And as the apostle writes to the Hebrews, 2. 18, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;" so may we hence argue for our encouragement, that He will be more merciful to judge them that in temptation fall. Therefore it is that He will be the Judge of all mankind, because He is at once both God and man.

"I can of mine own self," He adds, "do nothing." This He says as Son of man. This He adds, lest the Jews, who saw Him to be a man, and supposed Him to be a man only, should suppose that as a man He assumed authority to judge the rest of mankind. No, it is as He hears that He judges; as He hears of God, with whom He is ever one, as He hears of our behaviour, which is noted, as in a book, and is heard of, yea seen, ever by our Lord. Therefore is his judgment just. For it is the judgment of Almighty God. It is because He is the Son of man that He is appointed to the office; but it is as He is the Son of God that He will execute it. It is the will of the Father which He seeks in his judgment; for his will and the Father's will are one; He and the Father are one also. See John 10. 30.

May He make our will to be one with his, and one with the Father's! May He make us to be one with the Father, and one with his blessed self! May He make us in point of faith and charity to be also one with each other! May He make us to pass from death to life, at once because we believe in Him, and because we love our brethren! See 1 John 3. 14.

Christ declareth the testimony of others.

31 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

32 'There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

33 Ye sent unto John, and 'he bare witness unto the truth.

34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

36 But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, 'hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, 'nor seen his shape.

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

41 I receive not honour from men.

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

44 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only?

45 Do not think that I will accense you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust.

46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: 'for he wrote of me.

47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

¹ Ch. 8. 14. ² Matt. 3. 17. ³ Ch. 1. 7. ⁴ Matt. 3. 17. & 17. 5. ⁵ Deut. 4. 12. ⁶ Ch. 12. 43. ⁷ Gen. 3. 15. Deut. 18. 15.

§ 295. *How we should search the Scriptures.*

As the Jews were likely to object to the witness which Christ had borne of Himself, that therefore it was not true, He here declares to them three other signal testimonies, the witness of John, the witness of the Father, and the witness of the Scriptures. Of John, He reminds them, that they themselves were for a season willing to rejoice in his light. And this He said not as boasting, for He received not, cared not to receive "testimony from men," but on purpose that they might be saved; an purpose, that being thus convinced by testimony, they might now at length, ere too late, believe. Let us turn to this end, in our own behalf, what here we read of the truth of Christ. Let us so hear, that we may believe. Let us so believe, that we may "be saved." Let us seek to be saved through faith in Christ. Let us be willing to rejoice in the light of Christ, not for a season, but for ever.

But secondly, "I have greater witness," saith our Lord, "than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." The miracles then of Christ, and especially that chief of all works He had to do, his death upon the cross, these were the witness of the Father, these were in truth the Father's work. And this we may in a measure understand, by considering how our own best doings, which we feel to be in some degree our own, are yet truly works of God, wrought in us by his Spirit. We, as sons of God, do only that which He does in us. *Much more, our blessed Lord, being Son in far other sort than we are, did nothing, does nothing, but what the Father, with whom He is one, does. So that though we have not at any time heard the Father's voice, nor seen his shape, we may be sure that in the Gospel of the Son we have revealed to us the will of the Father also!

Let us therefore as our Lord bade the Jews, "search the scriptures;" both the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which were here intended, and those of the New, which have been since graciously imparted. Let us search them, as giving witness that Jesus is the Christ. Let us search them, that we may learn the will of God. Let us search them, under the full persuasion that in them we have eternal life. And in this search let us never be influenced by that regard for the good opinion of men, which supplants us we are here warned, the desire we ought to feel for "the honour that cometh from God only." Often are the best of mankind mistaken in their judgment. And if we hearken to the rest, there are some who would check our piety by scorn, and others who by their praise of worldly vanities would turn our hearts from things above. Whilst many even inculcate as desirable the pride, revenge, and covetousness, which we must daily labour to root out of our hearts. How can we receive honour from such as these, how can we aim to earn their good opinion, without falling away from holiness and love? And how if we fall off in practice, how can we continue to believe?

Let us remember, if we are wanting either in faith or in obedience, though Christ accuse us not, though it be his office not to accuse, but to intercede for mercy, yet is there one, there are many, who accuse. There is Moses who wrote of Christ, there are the prophets who spake of Him beforehand, there are the apostles who set down his words and works; there are all who in all generations, have obeyed better or believed more; all these there are to rise up in the judgment against us, all these to accuse, to condemn us. Let us no longer hesitate to receive their testimony. Let us rejoice to receive, and seek to understand it. Let us search the Scriptures for the truth. And in searching, let us desire no other praise, let us care to receive no other honour, than that "which cometh from God only!"

Christ feedeth five thousand.

1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea* of Tiberias.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 ¹ And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5 ² When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves,

and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'

¹ Lev. 23. 5. Deut. 16. 1.

² Matt. 14. 14.

§ 296. *The great effects of small means.*

This miracle took place, St. John tells us, "after these things," after what he had been before relating. And this means some time afterwards, probably a whole year; it having been one passover when Christ visited the pool of Bethesda, and another when He fed these five thousand men. "And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh." This accounts for so great a multitude being at the time assembled. For at this feast the whole people of the Jews were bound to worship at Jerusalem; and large companies used to travel towards the city, from every quarter. Now this passover was called the "feast of unleavened bread." Luke 22. 1. And the miracle of multiplying the loaves seems therefore the more appropriate to the time; and having been wrought at this time, it may well serve to remind us, that He who wrought it was the true "bread, which came down from heaven;" ch. 6. 41, that He was Himself our Passover, which was sacrificed for us. See 1 Cor. 5. 7.

"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" This we are told our Lord said to Philip, on purpose "to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do." And these latter words are a key to other passages in the Gospels, where Jesus whom we believe to have all power and to know all things, inquires as though He did not know, or requests as though He could not command. These things were done to prove those whom He addressed, to try them, by way of improving them, to try them, in order to their greater glory. And thus Moses tells the Jews of what they had suffered in the wilderness, that God had done it to humble them, and to prove them, to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep his commandments or no. See Deut. 8. 2.

There is another use to be derived from this question of our Lord's. For Philip's answer shews how large a quantity of bread was needed, so as for every one to take even a little. And the remark of Andrew, as to what store of provision could be found, shews how much less this was than would be wanted. Hence we are led to see the force of his reflection, "but what are they among so many?" And this question we may do well to ask, when we consider by what small and simple means God compasses his great works, both of providence and of grace. "The ants," says Solomon, "are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." Prov. 30. 25. The provision for the wants both of men and animals, the structure, not of our own frame only, but of every work of God which we examine, the daily increase of all living things, and the daily consumption of what is used for their support; all these matters are fit at once to raise our admiration, and to demand our thankfulness.

And thus also in the spreading abroad of the Gospel, let us count first the twelve apostles, then the seventy disciples, nay, let us take in also the thousands which were added to the church on the day of Pentecost, and now let us compare with them the many and great nations, the millions and millions of human beings, who have been brought into the fold of Christ; and must we not here ask, with devout astonishment, "What are they amongst so many?" And when we think how in this very fold are many who grievously offend, how around it the world still lies in wickedness, how few there are either of ministers or of people, who are as salt to the earth, to keep alive amongst mankind the true faith and love of Christ; when we reflect how it is for their sakes that the days of wrath are shortened, see Matt. 24. 22, and how it is through the means of their preaching and living, that all "the kingdoms of this world" must at length "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," Rev. 11. 15, must we not again ask, "What are they amongst so many?" Must we not humbly and thankfully acknowledge that they are only what God makes them, that they do only what by them He does?

Christ walketh on the sea ; reproveth the people.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

16 'And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship : and they were afraid.

20 But he saith unto them, It is I ; be not afraid.

21 Then they willingly received him into the ship : and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone

¹ Matt. 14. 23.

|| Or, *Work not.*

away alone ;

23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks :))

24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when earnest thou hither ?

26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 || Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : ² for him hath God the Father sealed.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God ?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, ³ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

² Matt. 3. 17.

³ 1 John 3. 23.

§ 297. *That we must labour for eternal life.*

The Jews knew that their Messiah was to be a King. And therefore, when they were persuaded that Jesus was the Christ, they designed by force to set Him up for an earthly ruler. This however was far from the kind of kingdom in which it was his intent to reign. And in order to avoid it, "he departed again into a mountain himself alone." It seems strange that at such a time his disciples should without Him have gone down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, to pass over to Capernaum. But from St. Matthew, 14. 22, we learn that He constrained them. Whatever we undertake, let us consult God's will, and wait as it were for orders from our Lord. And let us never be tempted to enter upon any business, wherein we cannot trust that we have Christ with us. Though at first it promise well, we may be sure that ere long there will some storm arise ; some wind of passion will fiercely blow, some darkness, for want of light divine, will come over us, to make us feel at once our own folly, and our entire dependence upon our Lord for help. It seems probable that the disciples were forgetful of this. Else why, when they saw Jesus, why should they have been afraid, if it were not that true courage comes of Christian faith, and can never be maintained where the conscience testifies that we have fallen short of Christian duty ? How should all the fears, which we are still apt to entertain, convince us of the faithlessness of which we still are guilty ! And how willingly when thus we have for a while neglected the guidance of our Lord, when we have set about our work in any spirit such as we doubt whether He would approve, how gladly should we receive Him back again into our hearts ; if it should please Him again to visit us, again to move us to repentance, and faith, and love !

That there was no other boat on that side of the lake, except the one into which the disciples entered, that the people saw this, and saw that Jesus went not with his disciples into it, and that they inquired with surprise, "Rabbi, when earnest thou hither?" all these things serve to bring home to our hearts the reality of the miracle which He wrought on the occasion. The people however followed Him, as He told them, not because they saw his miracles, but because they "did eat of the loaves, and were filled." They followed Him for the convenience of being fed without labour. And thus do many still profess to follow Christ, for the worldly advantages of religion, or in the hope of being nourished in spiritual things without any pains or exertion of their own. And therefore does He address to all this important precept ; "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." Whatever then be the extent of God's power working in us, we must notwithstanding labour. Whatever be the abundance of his grace, whatever the boundless compass of his love ; we must not withstanding labour. And whatever be our worldly work, let this be still our object, to labour for eternal life ; so to work, as to be serving God, through Christ Jesus. The very same thing, done with one view, may tend towards heaven, which done on another principle ends in hell. The same day's work wrought, the same alms given, the same pain endured, if endured, if given, if wrought, for the sake of Christ our Saviour, will turn our endless profit ; but if it be done for our credit's sake with the world, or out of any mere worldly motive whatever, can yield only "the meat which perisheth." This then let us remember is the work of God, to "believe on him whom he hath sent." This is the way we are to labour after heaven, that we labour to believe in Christ ; that we strive by prayer with God for faith, that through faith we love, and through love obey.

Christ declareth Himself to be the bread of life.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31 ¹ Our fathers did eat manna¹ in the desert; as it is written, ² He gave them bread from heaven to eat,

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of

life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 ³ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

¹ Exod. 16. 15. Num. 11. 7.

² Ps. 78. 25.

§ 298. *How belief is the gift of God.*

Here we have the same people, who had partaken of the five loaves, still asking for a further sign to be shewn by Christ, and objecting to Him as a miracle more convincing than his, that their fathers had eaten "manna in the desert." Our Lord replies, that the true "bread of God" is not the manna which Moses seemed to give them, any more than it is the meal with which He Himself had fed them, but it "is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And this is Jesus Christ. This is He whose servants, whose people, whose redeemed, we are. He is our bread, because bread is the chief of food to all mankind. He is our bread, because by bread our life is supported, and our strength nourished; because by Him alone we are able to do the work of God, by Him alone have life, to live for ever. Thus have we in the very least of those good deeds, which through his grace we do, a sign not less sure of his power and love than if He were to feed us by thousands with a single loaf, a proof more certain that we are fed by God, than if He were to rain down manna upon us for to eat, and to give us food from heaven. See Psalm 78. 25.

"Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread." They thought that He meant some marvellous kind of food; and they asked for it as for a sign from heaven, for a miracle to be addressed to their outward senses. To make the matter therefore more plain, He replies, "I am the bread of life." Here He directly signifies that He is the very staff of our spiritual subsistence; that it is through Him that our converted souls, in their new and heavenly course, do live, and move, and have their being. And that this is his true meaning is shewn further in what follows; "he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." For coming to Him is here explained to be believing on Him. And as faith cannot prevent us from craving for our natural food, this promise must apply to our spiritual support; that when the soul is weak, through Christ it shall be strong; when faint, through Him it shall revive; when weary, through Him shall be refreshed; when empty, through Him shall be replenished.

"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not." This is what He had said before, that they followed Him for the loaves which they had eaten of. See ver. 26. For as in eating of them they had proof of his power, so in following Him for the sake of what they could get to eat, they gave proof that they believed not as they ought. And why did they not believe? Because the Father had not given them the grace to come to Christ. For all, says our Lord, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." So that to believe we must come to Christ; and to come to Christ it must be given us of God. For it was to do the will of God, not the will of man, that Christ came down from heaven; it was to give effect, not to our worthless wishes, but to the merciful design of the Almighty Father. And his design it is that Christ should lose none of all which thus come to Him. And who these are is thus further explained; "every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him." For of these it is the Father's will that they should have everlasting life; of these does Christ here promise, that He will raise them up at the last day. Thus we see that the salvation of our souls depends chiefly on two things, the will of God moving us, and our willingness to be moved. And of these two, we are here plainly taught that the will of God is both the first in order, and in effect supreme. It is for us to come. But it is for God to move us unto coming. It is God who at the commencement of our Christian life, and afterwards, in each thought of faith, and in each act of obedience, it is God who gives, even to the most willing heart, both the first impulse and the final victory.

"Lord, evermore give us this bread!" Give us, what else we shall hunger for in vain, the will to come to Thee! Give us the grace to believe on Thee, that our souls may not thirst for ever!

Christ answereth the Jews who murmured at Him

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42 And they said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?'

43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

45 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, 'save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.'

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat?

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

¹ Matt. 13. 55.

² Is. 54. 13. Jer. 31. 34.

³ Matt. 11. 27.

§ 299. *The excellency of our spiritual life.*

See how God is always bringing good out of evil! See how the murmuring of the Jews is made profitable to the instruction of the Christian church! They murmured at Jesus for saying, that He was "the bread which came down from heaven." They murmured because they could not, or rather would not, understand, how this could be. They considered Him to be "the son of Joseph;" and they concluded that He came into the world in an ordinary way. And they were thus bent against receiving his testimony, that He had in a way before unheard of come down from heaven. In his answer, our Lord repeats what He had said before, teaching us one that had authority: not explaining things above our comprehension, but requiring us to believe, for this reason, because He has told us.

Thus He repeats what He had said of its being necessary, that those who come unto Him should all be drawn of the Father. And this He confirms further by the authority of God's word in the Old Testament, quoting from Isaiah 54. 13, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." All which we must believe not as seeing, but on the evidence of things not seen; not as understanding how, or why, but as able to understand that so it is, and believing because Christ our Saviour has said it is so. Thus should we never murmur at the divine sayings, when we consider them as uttered only for our good; when we reflect that it is our ignorance which makes them hard, and that they are designed by God's goodness to make us wise; that He will help us, if we pray, both to hear and know them; and that whether we hear, or whether we forbear, they are truth.

And what profitable truths are these, which are here repeated and insisted on by our Lord? That He is "the bread of life!" That to believe on Him ensures that we shall live for ever! That as bread satisfies our hunger, as food prolongs our existence on the earth, so does He support the life which is in our souls, so is believing on Him the feeding of our souls, the satisfying of their hunger, the supplying of their wants, the refreshing of their strength! How forcibly does He here teach us, that besides the life we live in the body, we have in Him a new and spiritual existence; that besides the life we derive from the first Adam, we inherit quite another kind of life from the second Adam; that besides the actions which we do with our hands, besides the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears, we have other senses, and other means of living; thoughts which may either sin, or glorify God; purposes and affections, which may either pine with hunger, or grow with heavenly nourishment, and which, if they are here fed by Him, will through Him endure for ever! What is earthly food, what is earthly treasure, compared with the enjoyment of such sustenance as this? What was manna in the wilderness, though the gift of God, compared to the flesh which Christ gave for the life of the world? Are not they dead who ate the manna? Did not their bodies perish, like to those of other men? But is this the case with souls that feed by faith on Jesus Christ? Behold, they live by Him! Behold, they live for ever! Their very bodies partake of this quickening influence. Their very bodies He will raise up at the last day. Their souls never die. Death suspends not for an instant their activity; only removes them from earth to heaven. Their earthly duties cease. Their heavenly joys begin. They cease to be patient in tribulation; for there is no sorrow. They cease to believe; for there they see; they "see face to face." 1 Cor. 13. 12. Only they never cease to love. "Charity never faileth." 1 Cor. 13. 8. Love is the last of their occupations here, it is the whole of their work in heaven.

Christ answereth his disciples who were offended.

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

62 ¹ What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

66 From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 ² And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

¹ Ch. 3. 13.

² Matt. 16. 16.

§ 300. *To whom shall we go, if not to Christ, for true religion.*

The doctrine which our Lord had been teaching in the synagogue of Nazareth seemed to the disciples, as well as to the people, a hard saying. And so it has seemed to many, from that time to the present. That the innocent should die for the guilty, that by the death of one many should be made righteous, that by our partaking of his flesh, through faith, our souls are nourished, as our bodies are by food, and both souls and bodies made to live for ever: these are things far above our comprehension; these are sayings which may very probably seem hard to ourselves. But whilst we admit thus much, let us take care that we never murmur at them, that we are not offended at them. And let us observe the way by which our Lord goes on to satisfy his disciples; not by any further explaining of what He had said, but by referring to the power of God, by telling them that they should see with their own eyes a thing quite as hard to account for, as this which He had been telling them. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" The ascension of Jesus into heaven was a thing as much beyond all our reasoning beforehand, as his death on the cross. And when they should see this strange thing take place, then surely, He implied, they would believe on his word whatsoever He had thought fit to tell them. Surely then too they would understand that He meant not that they should literally eat his flesh; for they would then see it taken away, far out of their reach. So that it must be the spiritual feeding on Him that He meant. And this it was most important for them, it is most important for us, to understand. And this spiritual feeding is by faith. And without this faith, they are in no wise profited who hear his word, no, nor they who partake of the very bread which betokens his crucified flesh.

Our Lord, whilst He thus enforced these most important Christian doctrines, knew all the time that there were some among his professed disciples who were averse to believe. And it was for their sakes that He repeated the necessity of their being drawn by the Father. For the more we are convinced that our faith is of God's giving, we shall be both more watchful if we have it, to maintain it, and more earnest to pray for it, if as yet we have it not. And He would have had these unbelieving disciples betake themselves to more hearty prayer, and to more humble reliance on the Giver of all good gifts. They however, on the contrary, "from that time" "went back, and walked no more with him." They stumbled at the doctrines here insisted on. They would go thus far and no further. And upon their turning away, our Lord inquired of the twelve, whether they were in like manner offended, whether they would in like manner desert Him.

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" replied Peter, "thou hast the words of eternal life." Let this be our reflection, when we are perplexed by any difficulty either of faith or practice. Let this be our answer to the tempter, when he would draw us either into doubt or sin. To whom should we go, if not to Christ; to what standard of truth, to what rule of life, if not to his blessed Gospel? What system, if not this, will give us help to holiness, what promises, if not these, will give us peace at the last? But let us not trust in the mere conviction of the truth of the Gospel, in the mere possession of Gospel privileges. Let us see in the case of Judas, here pressed on our attention, how vain are such advantages if we fail to improve them. A man might be chosen to be an apostle, and yet be "a devil." A man may be chosen to enjoy all Christian light, and yet in the end perish everlastingly. Let not us then ever trust in what we are. But the more we have enjoyed of light and knowledge, the more let us still endeavour to obtain of grace, the more let us still labour to advance in faith, and holiness, and love.

Lord, to whom shall we go, if not to Thee? Thou hast, and who else but Thou, the words of eternal life? Thou canst teach, and Thou only! Thou canst save, and Thou only! "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Christ reproveth the unbelief of his brethren.

1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2 ¹ Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

3 His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

4 For *there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly.* If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

¹ Lev. 23. 34.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; ² for my time is not yet full come.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee.

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

² ch. 8. 20.

§ 301. *That the friendship of the world is enmity with God.*

The Jews were directed to observe the feast of tabernacles, by making themselves booths of boughs, and dwelling in them for seven days. See Levit. 23. 34—44. And this was to keep up the recollection of how God had brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt; on which occasion they were forced for many years to dwell in tents. As then the passover of the Jews is observed by us in remembrance of Christ our Passover being slain for us, and as we celebrate at the season of the Pentecost the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Christian church, so it would be well, if by the mention of their feast of tabernacles, we were reminded of our being but pilgrims upon the earth. Here we dwell, as it were in tents, in houses that last not long, looking "for a city which hath foundations," Heb. 11. 10, for a house "eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1. Thus at least we ought to dwell, thus we ought to feel. And if thus we feel not, no feast that we can keep will profit us, no life that we can live on earth can be counted for loving God.

It seems almost as if the brethren of Jesus sought purposely to bring Him into peril, before his time, when they endeavoured by taunting words to prevail on Him to go up to Jerusalem. This may serve to warn us, against ever tempting or provoking one another, by words of ridicule or scorn. And here we should observe how strange it seems, that after Jesus had done so many wondrous works, these brethren, who were probably the children of Mary by her husband Joseph, should not yet believe Him to be the Christ! This is like to what may be often seen in families amongst ourselves. One brother is eminent in piety; the rest are little better than unbelievers. One may serve God faithfully; whilst the rest set at nought his counsel for the salvation of their souls. Let no one therefore trust in relationship to others who are eminent in the faith. To be born after our Lord, of the same mother, was not enough to ensure immediate conviction. Nor let any one despond on finding fruitless all the pains he takes in the conversion of his brethren. For some time after Christ began to preach the Gospel, "neither did his brethren believe in him."

"Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come," meaning his time of being delivered up to death; and therefore, He implied, He should not go up to the feast as early as they suggested. Yet afterwards He went up, only not early, and not openly, not so as to draw upon Himself the attention and persecution of the Jewish rulers. As for his brethren themselves, their time, He told them, was always ready: for the world could not hate them. That is to say, they might at any time go in safety. For no one wished to do them any harm. But what an awful condition was this to be in, that the world could not hate them! What an awful condition for us, if we are such as that our time is always ready for the world's good will, we always welcome to the approbation of the world! How can we be doing our Christian duty, without testifying in all we do, that the works of the world are evil? And how if we thus testify in good earnest, how can we escape the hatred of many? And on which side would we prefer to stand? with Christ whom the world hated? or with his brethren whom the world could not hate? And what is the enmity of the world? The frowns, the slander, the opposition, the affronts of men who so soon depart, what are these, that they should be compared with the wrath of God, with the pains which endure for ever? Oh, never may it be forgotten in our hearts, that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God!" James 4. 4. Never may we love the world's praise! Never may we covet the world's wealth! Never may we shrink, if our duty requires us, to encounter the world's hatred! Only so far let us love the world, as to love all them that are in the world; so far as to do them all the good in our power; though they curse, yet in return to bless, though they despitefully use and persecute us, yet to pray for them that it may please God to turn their hearts. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23. 34. Let this be our prayer for all them that hate us. Let this be our intercession for the world, that still lieth, as we fear, in wickedness. Father, forgive them, as we trust Thou hast forgiven us! Father, forgive them, for the sake of Christ our Lord!

Christ teacheth in the temple.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill

me?

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

||-Or, learning. ¹ Ex. 24. 3. ² ch. 5. 18. ³ Lev. 12. 3. ⁴ Gen. 17. 10. † Or, without breaking the law of Moses. ⁵ Deut. 1. 16.

§ 302. *How we must judge righteous judgment.*

Our Lord would not go to Jerusalem as early as his brethren desired: and yet "about the midst of the feast" He "went up into the temple and taught." This was the time at which both the temple and the city were most full. He was therefore less likely to be taken privily by snare, and more likely by his preaching to make a deep and general impression. Let us resolve, whether it be our duty to teach, or only by example and conversation to influence our neighbours, let us resolve so to do for good, in a large company, no less than in one that is small. Let no concourse of a multitude, no thronging of society, make us ashamed of the principles we profess. And in the midst of numbers let us never forget, that we are no less certainly in God's sight, than when we stand alone in his presence. In such cases the topics of discourse may be necessarily different, but the view with which we speak must be still the same, to promote the glory of God, and to "minister grace unto the hearers." Eph. 4. 29.

The Jews marvelled at the teaching of Jesus, because they knew the manner of his early life, and were aware that it had not been spent in such study as is needful to fit a man for teaching others. "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." What He taught came not from his studying as a man, but from the direct inspiration of God. And this they might have known, if they had been so minded. For, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." This then was the qualification for discerning Christ to be a divine Teacher, a disposition to do the will of God. This it is which will help us also to know true doctrine from that which is false. We must be willing to obey the truth beforehand. We must wish that what we read, however painful to the flesh, may prove to be the truth, if it redound to the welfare of the soul, and to our Saviour's glory. And this, our Lord added, was a proof that his words were true, his here not speaking of Himself, but seeking rather the glory of the Father. And this we should find profitable to our success, in what we do towards the improvement of our neighbours; to shew that we do it not for our own pleasure, not by way of exalting ourselves, but entirely with a view to their advantage, and to the honour of Almighty God.

And next our Lord would convince the Jews that they were not thus minded to do the will of God, and that this was the reason of their not believing his words. He remarks therefore how, in their readiness to kill Him, they violated the sixth commandment, whilst they pretended a zeal for the fourth. And he reminds them how they themselves were forced to dispense with the law of the sabbath, in order to comply with the law of circumcision. For they used to circumcise each child on the eighth day from the birth, whether it were the sabbath day or not. And in so doing they neglected the appearance of doing right, for the sake of the substance. And thus Christ bade them do likewise in their judging of Him. And thus our Lord would have us do in such judgments as we have occasion to form of each other. We must not judge according to the outward appearance, but according to the real truth. We must not judge partially, according to the persons; but according to the things, as they are, and not as they appear. For else many times we shall be tempted to allow in one, what in another we condemn. And often things seem wrong on the first appearance, which, if we knew more thoroughly, we should think of better. Meantime let us hope always for the best. Let us judge charitably, and we shall then judge righteous judgment; righteous, because true, if our neighbour should be in reality meaning better than he seemed; righteous, because, whether he be right or wrong, it is our duty as sinners who have been forgiven, always to judge others as we have been judged ourselves. Lord, be not, Thou extreme to mark what we do amiss! Lord, let not us be hasty to find fault, or eager to condemn each other! Help us to think no evil; even as Thou hast kindly thought of us, hast blotted out all our transgressions, and our sins and our iniquities dost remember no more!

Christ teacheth before the officers who are sent to take Him.

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

29 But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

31 And many of the people believed on him, and

said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

¹ ch. 13. 33.

|| Or, Greeks.

§ 303. *That life is short, and death a change for the better.*

That our Lord should speak boldly in the midst of the temple, this made the people marvel why the rulers did not interfere, and doubt whether they did not know Him to be "the very Christ." So great is the fruit of courage in our Christian conduct! So largely does it convince the beholders, both that we are in earnest, and that we are right! But on the other hand the people were under an impression, that, "when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." So that on this ground of their knowing, as they supposed, the parentage of Jesus, they could not allow Him to be the Christ. Our Lord signifies, in his answer, that, so far as they knew his origin, it should have brought them to the contrary conclusion. The lowliness of his birth and education should have convinced them, that He came not of Himself, but must have been sent by that true God, whom in Him they refused to acknowledge. This answer provoked some of them to seek to take Him. "But no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." However gently we state the truth, it will not fail in some cases to give offence. But whatever hatred we may meet with for the truth's sake, let it console us hence to learn, that no harm can happen to us but with God's permission; no man can lay hands on us, till that hour be come, when it is good for us to suffer, or still better to depart.

"And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" So that they believed by reason of the marvels which they saw. And these miracles must have been the most decisive of all proofs to those who have the happiness to behold them. And for us it is most satisfactory to add this testimony, that they were not only done, but so done as to convince, so done as to prove to those who saw them, that He who wrought them was the Christ. These thoughts, thus whispered about amongst the people, determined the chief priests and Pharisees on attempting to take Him by force. And for this purpose they sent officers, in whose presence our Lord proceeded, as before, to teach his divine doctrines. And they, instead of taking Him, according to their orders, listened, it seems, in silent conviction, whilst He taught the people concerning Himself, that He should shortly ascend unto the Father. "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me." In vain do the rulers send these officers to take my person. I shall continue, for such is the will of God, I shall continue for a time to teach in your streets. And when my time is over, I shall go, not to the custody of my enemies, but to the presence of Him that sent me. "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me." Neither shall enemies be able to find me for the satisfying of their revenge, nor friends for the fulfilment of their joy. "Where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Let this be always the view we take of our continuance in this present life, and of the change which we are to undergo at death. Only a little while let us reckon here to remain; and when we die, let us hope to go to Him who sent us hither. A little while it will surely seem, though we see the end of threescore years and ten. How much less if we should be cut off long before! How much worse, if at the end we could not go to where Christ is! And, oh, how much better than we deserve, that both our time must here be short, and that we may, at the end of it, go to the Father. A little while only we have to suffer here; a little while to endure temptation; a little while to resist the tempter, to wrestle with the flesh, to renounce the world. A little while only we have for sorrow, but eternity for joy; a little while for want, but eternity for treasure in heaven; a little while for shame, but eternity for the crown of glory, eternity for the fellowship of saints and angels, eternity for the presence of Almighty God!

Christ teacheth in the last day of the feast.

37 ¹ In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 ² He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 ³ But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

42 ⁴ Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but

no man laid hands on him.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (⁵ he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

51 ⁶ Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

53 And every man went unto his own house.

¹ Lev. 23. 36.

² Deut. 18. 15.

³ Joel 2. 28. Is. 44. 3.

⁴ Matt. 2. 5.

⁵ ch. 3. 2.

⁶ Deut. 17. 8, &c. & 19. 15.

§ 304. *How we should cleave to truth though it be unpopular.*

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." The offer here made by Christ is of universal application. Let us consider it as addressed to ourselves. Do we thirst? Have we any desire unsatisfied? Do we suffer from any passion striving within us for the mastery? Do we experience the misery of hope deferred of wants which we cannot supply? Do we feel any of this craving in respect to heavenly satisfaction? Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness, and still find that we are not filled? We cannot then yet have come, as we ought to do, unto Christ. We cannot, as we ought, have believed. For unto all who duly believe in Him, it was promised, by the whole tenour of ancient prophecy, and the promise is interpreted and confirmed by Christ, that unto them should be given the abundance of grace, the fulness of peace and joy.

If we have not that grace, if we have not the Holy Spirit making us holy, the fault must be in ourselves, it must be in our faith. What then is effectual Christian faith? How may we so believe as to obtain the gift here graciously proposed? This is a point on which there is now much "division among the people," as there was at first on the question whether Jesus were the Christ. And as then many were perplexed by those words of Scripture, which were meant to guide them into truth, so now do the advocates of most opposite opinions each plead in their defence the same sacred volume. And whilst one party would argue from St. Paul that a man is justified by faith without holiness, another would conclude from St. James that it is possible to be holy without faith. But if we first thoroughly persuade ourselves that all Scripture is true, all "given by inspiration of God," 2 Tim. 3. 16, we shall be aware that all its parts must agree thoroughly with each other; though it may be we cannot always discern the agreement. And we shall consider passages which seem to be at variance, as helps towards our learning the exact truth, by the means of diligent comparison. Christ was born in Bethlehem, as the prophet had foretold; see Micah 5. 2, and yet He truly came out of Galilee, because there He was brought up. Again a man is justified by faith without the works of the law. See Gal. 2. 16. And yet without holiness no man shall see the Lord. See Heb. 12. 14. For without holiness ensuing no man can have justifying faith. See James 2. 26.

Whilst the people were thus divided, the chief priests and Pharisees supposed that amongst themselves there was but one opinion. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" And yet Nicodemus, one of their number, had gone to Jesus by night, and was now evidently bent on defeating the design of taking him by force. "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" In both instances he shewed a regard for truth, and gave evidence of a disposition to believe. But in neither case did he openly avow his conviction that Jesus was the Christ. And as he is neither censured for an unworthy fear, nor praised for a seasonable discretion, we may note rather in his conduct what we know to be good, that he believed when all the other rulers refused assent. Is there any truth which is now generally discredited? any which the rulers of this world discountenance, and which the multitude too are tempted to treat with scorn? Let us not be disheartened in our faith, by its happening that what we hold is unpopular. The more it is discredited, we ought to be the more careful to be sure that it is true; but if sure, we ought also to be the more careful to believe. Like Nicodemus we should be content to stand alone in the truth, rather than be in error with a multitude. Like the officers who were sent to take Jesus, we must even disobey those who are in lawful authority, rather than do violence to our Lord, or to his words. "Never man spake like this man." None must we serve in preference to Him. None must we in preference to Him obey.

Christ delivereth the woman taken in adultery.

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5 ¹ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not.*

¹ Lev. 20. 10.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, ² He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

9 And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

² Deut. 17. 7.

§ 305. *That we must henceforth sin no more.*

In order to understand the purport of this history, we should consider first, that the scribes and Pharisees applied not to our Lord for any good purpose, out of any good intention; but with a view to draw Him into a snare. They put their question to Him, “tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.” And next we should observe how their question was expressed: “Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?” They supposed that He must either have given sentence against the woman, or have found fault with the Law of Moses. In the first case He must have taken on Himself to act as judge, and must have enforced a punishment, which, in the gross immorality of the Jews, had been long disused. In the second case, they would have counted Him guilty of no less than blasphemy against God. Our Lord’s answer, therefore, was directed not to their question, but to their snare; not to solve the doubt they stated, but to confound the plot they were devising.

And this end He compassed, by turning their own craft against themselves. For knowing, as He did, their hearts, He knew that there was among them no one without sin, no one whose conscience could not be made to testify to guilt no less grievous, if not the very same with this which was brought before Him. At first, therefore, He “stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground,” which may probably mean, as our translators have here signified, that He made “as though he heard them not.” And this might be done both to give time for some of them to retire, if there were any who could be moved with compunction. And for the rest, it might serve to make them suppose Him to be perplexed; that thus the more they were for the present satisfied with themselves, the more their consciences might in the end be smitten by his answer. “So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” This is the searching sentence of our Lord to all who press on Him the speedy judgment of the wicked. These are words which must ever convince those of sin, who murmur at the prosperity of sin in others. This shews also, that though God keep long silence, He can reprove and bring to light the most secret wickedness, and make it stand along with the most open iniquity, in the same scale of offence against Himself. Thus was the temptation of the Pharisees brought to nothing. Thus they themselves “being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.”

“And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” Here then we have a distinct part of this history to review. No longer has our Lord to deal with Pharisees tempting Him, but with a woman both convicted of gross sin, and convinced also, as we may justly hope, that she was a grievous sinner in the sight of God. For this is one great use, and one very frequent consequence of public shame; it helps powerfully, under God’s grace, to work contrition in the heart. How then does Christ address Himself to this manifest offender? As a judge? Far from it. For as He had before said of Himself, “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” Ch. 3. 17. At his second coming He will execute judgment. At his first He had to teach, or rather to be, the way of salvation. Thus then we may interpret his gracious words, considering them as addressed not to this woman only, but to us also in our sins, whether secret or notorious. “Neither do I condemn thee.” I pass not on thee the sentence of instant death; but I bid thee, whilst life is yet spared, I most earnestly exhort thee to repent, with amendment of life. “Go, and sin no more.” Go, from being convicted in guilt, go from being convinced of sin, go to the tears of penitence, to the change of a converted heart. Go, from shame under the censure of mankind, to selfabasement in the presence of the allseeing God. Go, in the assurance that with Him there is mercy. Go, in the persuasion that thy sins may be forgiven. Go, in the sense of thankfulness for his love. Go, in the full purpose to obey his will. “Go, and sin no more.”

Christ justifieth his testimony.

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

14 Jesus answered and said unto them, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for

I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

17 "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

¹ Ch. 1. 5. & 9. 5.

² Ch. 5. 31.

³ Deut. 17. 6. Matt. 18. 16.

§ 306 *The connexion of doctrine and practice.*

This passage is remarkable as an instance of what is elsewhere set down of our Lord, that "he taught as one having authority." Matt. 7. 29. For first He declares this of Himself, which if He had no such authority, would be the height of presumption, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And when the Pharisees objected that his record was not true, because He bare record of Himself, He replied that it was true notwithstanding, for this reason, that He knew whence He came, and whither He should go. And this means, that He knew of Himself that He came from heaven, and that He should return to heaven. For it meant, as He also tells them, something which they were not aware of. "Ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go." They supposed Him to have come into the world as the son of Joseph and Mary. And if this had been the truth, they could easily have told it. But they judged herein after the flesh. They reckoned Him to have come into the world after the manner of the flesh. And according to the lowliness of his supposed birth, and outward appearance, they took Him to be a mere man, no other than themselves.

"Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man." That is to say, I do not exercise whilst on earth the office of a judge. I condemn not, as you would have had me do, even those who are detected in most gross offences; that thus you may the better see how wrong it is in you to judge; in you, who can see no more than the outside show of things. Whereas if I should see fit to judge, my judgment would be true. And why? Because I judge not as man only, but as God; as a Son who is One with the Father: "for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." And hence our Lord goes on to give further answer to the objection of the Jews, that He bare record of Himself, telling them, that as according to their law the testimony of two men must be received for true, see Deut. 17. 6, so ought they to receive that testimony in favour of the Gospel, in which the Father and the Son were united. This then implies evidently, that the Father and the Son are in some sense two. This should keep us ever on our guard against that error in our apprehension of their divine nature, which is called in one of our creeds, "confounding the persons." (Athanasian Creed.) And lest we should on the other hand be tempted to divide the substance, (see same Creed,) let us weigh well what our Lord says in his next sentence, in answer to the Jews asking Him, "Where is thy Father?" Jesus answered, Ye neither know me nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

Do these matters exhaust our attention? Is the reasoning too long for us to follow? Is the doctrine too deep for us to understand? Why then are these words written in God's book? Why did Jesus speak these things "in the treasury, as he taught in the temple?" Were they fitting for the ears of Jews, and shall they raise no interest in Christians? Should it be of no concern to us to know all of God we can, and to desire, if it be possible, to know more? How, but by knowing Him, can we know what we ought to be ourselves? And is it enough to know that He is great and good? May we safely neglect to study those particulars of his greatness and his goodness, which are revealed to us in his written word? No, surely, it is by these that we are to be confirmed in the very foundation of our Christian hopes. We are to look to God as to a Father reconciled, reconciled with us through God the Son, and making us to be holy through God the Holy Ghost. And thus we are brought at once to matter of daily practice. We are to be holy, because He that helps us is Holy. We are to believe, because the benefits of the death of Christ are assured to us only through our faith. We are to love even as sons a Father, a Father who in our estranged state still loved us, and who has now taken us back again into friendship with Himself. And if what we may comprehend is thus connected with our practice, is not that also, which is still above our reach, well fitted to humble our pride in our abilities; to detach our attention from the study of the world; and to convince us continually as we proceed, that in our understanding, as well as in our practice; we can do nothing of ourselves to help ourselves?

Christ speaketh of the Father.

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.

25 Then they said unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even *the same* that I said unto you from the beginning.

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

§ 307. *The necessity and efficacy of faith.*

These sayings of our Lord to the Jews are well fitted to produce on us the effect which they had on those who heard them: "as he spake these words, many believed on him." For see how sad a warning is here set down against those who believe not: "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." This our Lord said to them, of their seeking Him, after He should have ascended into heaven. This we may conceive said to us, if we put off to seek Him till too late; if we desire not to go where He is gone, till we are on the point of being taken to another place. For this He said to all those who shall die in their sins. And who these are He thus also describes, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world: I am not of this world." How dreadful a condition; to seek, and not to find; if we should call, and He not hear; if we should live without a thought of heaven, and die in our sins, die without a possibility of being saved from death eternal!

To which world then may we hope that we ourselves belong? to that which is beneath, or to that which is above? On which world do our thoughts chiefly run? on this which we now inhabit, or on that to which our Lord is gone? On which is our chief affection set? To which chiefly are the actions of our lives directed? These questions if we would sift honestly, these if we could truly solve, then should we know how far we are likely, how far it is possible for us, to go to that world where Christ now is. And if we find great difficulty in thus fixing our hearts on the world we fain would go to, let us here learn what that is which is really wanting. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins." All depends on whether we do heartily believe that Jesus is the Christ, that He died to save our souls alive. Nothing short of faith in Him, nothing short of that love which comes of believing that in Him we have salvation, nothing short of such faith and love as this, can wean our hearts from this present world, and make us in earnest to seek first the world which is to come.

"Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." This convicted them of asking where they were already informed. This proved that they wanted will rather than information, for more effectual belief. And this it seems must be the case with us, if we believe not what is here so plainly set down of who Christ is; how what He spake was what He had heard from the Father; how the Father who had sent Him was ever with Him; and how He did always things pleasing to the Father. These are truths, which nothing but our unwillingness to believe could prevent us from receiving as divine. And these we are unwilling to believe, because we are unwilling to live as this faith would require us. For how, if we once heartily receive these things for certain truths, how could we help devoting our whole lives to do what Christ has taught? How could we help setting our whole affection on the heaven which He has promised?

"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*." The Jews must first crucify Christ, and then afterwards they would many of them acknowledge Him. Some would be afterwards converted to his faith; and many, when too late, would be convinced by the subsequent visitation of their city. Thus Christians also not unfrequently first lift up the Son of man, first crucify their Lord by wilful sins, ere they feel their need of his redeeming love. God grant that we may not then first repent, when it is too late to believe unto salvation! God grant that we may not then first believe, when it is the hour for death and judgment! God save us from dying in our sins! God make us, each day that we hear his word, to repent more truly, to love more heartily, to obey more willingly, to believe more firmly; to be less fond of this world, which is below; to be more desirous of those good things which are above, where Christ for ever dwells!

Christ denieth the Jews to be children of Abraham.

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ¹Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye

shall be free indeed.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God.

¹ Rom. 6. 20. 2 Pet. 2. 19.

§ 308. *That Christ can make free from sin.*

"If ye continue in my word;" this is the sign by which our Lord here lays down who are his "disciples indeed." Not, if we receive it at first with joy, and afterwards treat it with indifference; not, if with our lips we own it to be his, but in our lives utterly disokey it; but if we continue in it, if we persevere in well doing to the end of life, if we faint not at the many tribulations which beset a course of selfdenial and Christian charity; then are we Christ's disciples indeed. And see how great are then our privileges! We shall know the truth. We shall not be "carried about with every wind of doctrine;" Eph. 4. 14; we shall "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Ch. 7. 17. And the truth will make us free. And this freedom is to be free from sin. It is to be free from that which comes of sin, free from servile fear. It is to be free to do right, not wrong. It is to be set free from the captivity of Satan, "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Rom. 8. 21.

* "They answered him." That is to say, the Pharisees here interrupted Him. For these could not be the Jews "which believed on him;" else they soon gave sad proof that they continued not in his word. For they who answered, both sought to kill Him, as we here read, and they were told afterwards by our Lord, that they were of their father the devil. See ver. 44. "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." They were affronted at the notion of being made free, as implying that they were then in a state of bondage. And so they really were in bondage, as our Lord explains, to sin. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." This is the most hard of all servitude. These are the most galling of all chains. This is the slavery from which we should most desire to free both ourselves and others. And the liberty which we should most earnestly seek after is this, the being never in bondage to any sin. For what oppression can be so great as to be constrained to do wrong, as to be subject to a force, which binds not only the outward frame, but the inward principle; which imprisons not only the body, but the soul? The earthly oppressor may make poor, but he cannot rob the poor of contentment. The earthly oppressor may take captive, but he cannot deprive the captive of patience in confinement, of peace and hope and joy. But sin, if it prevail against the conscience, drags also into captivity the inner man, compels him not to do the good he would, and the evil that he would not that to do. See Rom. 7. 19. Let us remember that from such servitude as this the Son only can make us free. It is not the being Abraham's seed. It matters not of whom we are born after the flesh, of what rank, or station, or country, or community. But the deeds which we do, those shew who is our father. "If ye were Abraham's children," said Jesus to the Jews, "ye would do the works of Abraham." If we are become, through adoption and grace, children of God, we shall do the works of God. These works are sure proof of our being truly sons. For it is only by being sons that we can do these works.

If then we have by our baptism been brought into that blessed family, whereof Christ is Himself "the firstborn among many brethren;" Rom. 8. 29; if we have received in many ways advantage from this our new and spiritual birth; if to this first beginning we may trace backwards step by step each thought of good, to which we have been moved by divine grace; let us be thankful unto Him who has thus graciously adopted us. Let us, as dutiful children of so kind a Father, offer freely of that service which He requires for our good. It is one thing we see to be Abraham's seed; another to be Abraham's children. It is one thing to be born of God in baptism; it is another to grow up, as our new birth both enables and requires us, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4. 13. To be born anew must needs come first, must needs come before we can live anew. But neither can take place without God's grace helping us. And what can the one profit us without the other? Oh, may we live as we have been born, children of God! Oh, may we be in death, what we have been made in life, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven!

Christ is accused of having an evil spirit.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44 'Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45 And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

47 'He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

¹ 1 John 3. 8.

² 1 John 4. 6.

§ 309. *What it is not to see death.*

The Jews had been boasting that they had one Father, even God, when Jesus made this reply: "If God were your Father, ye would love me." This is also our character; if we were truly sons of God, we should love Jesus Christ. And we all know that to love Him implies the keeping of his commandments. See ch. 14. 21. But let us never forget that it implies more than the keeping them: even the keeping them with pleasure, the having delight in keeping them. This is to love our Lord. And such love as this it is that makes us to be the sons of God. For this is one chief difference between the obedience of servants and of sons: the one service is often done through fear or interest, negligently, ignorantly, unwillingly; the other is done with pleasure, and therefore is done well, is done freely, zealously, thankfully.

And this doctrine of the necessity of our loving God is so plain, that nothing but a determination not to hear the words of Christ can hinder a man from thoroughly understanding it. "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word." To this severe reproof our Lord further adds: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This shews us how largely Satan is concerned in all iniquity and impiety of mankind. This should lead us, whenever evil thoughts arise, to consider them as suggested by an enemy, by one who is both a liar and a murderer. False are all the pleas he whispers, in order to encourage us in sin. Fatal to our soul's health, fatal to our hope of everlasting life, are the doubts which he endeavours to nourish in our hearts, the prejudices against receiving the word of Christ which he continually endeavours to establish, or confirm. Never let us believe the evil spirit, however agreeable to our corrupted will may be the thoughts which he would encourage in our minds. Never let us, like the Jews here censured by our Lord, be unwilling to believe his heavenly words, because they contain unwelcome truth.

And observe how it is that we may have grace to hear God's words. It comes of God moving us to hear. "He that is of God heareth God's words;" he to whom it is given of God. By his gift it is that we are willing to hear, able to understand, or stedfast to obey. And this we should continually bear in mind; this we should be ever ready to confess; learning, from the example of our Lord Himself, in all things to honour the Father. For nothing is further from the spirit of the Gospel, than that in any thing we should seek our own glory, especially in our religious proficiency. "There is one that seeketh and judgeth." There is one, namely the Father, who requires that men should honour Him, and who will judge them that honour Him not. Let us remember that it is his revealed will, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Ch. 5. 23. Let us honour Him, by obeying his Son's words. Let us honour Him, by taking the more pains ourselves to strive, in proportion as we are persuaded that our success must be his gift.

And now see how great is the gift, to hear God's words; to hear them in such sort as to keep them. Are not Christ's words God's words? And has not Christ here said of his own words, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death?" What a fearful sight is this to be spared! Even the last enemy that shall be destroyed! That enemy, if we do but keep Christ's saying, we shall never see. We shall have no view of his horrors. We shall have no fearful apprehension of his coming. We shall see in him not an enemy but a friend. He will indeed make the eyes to close, the breath to cease, the pulse no more to beat. But in them that die in the Lord, and these are they that keep Christ's saying, death cannot make the soul to fear, death cannot make the heart to cease from love. Death can take us from this world of woe; but he cannot stay us from entering into the joys of eternity. Death can take us from lands and houses, from friends and much loved relations; but he cannot hinder us from attaining unto treasure in heaven, or from being joined to the company of just men made perfect. And in the moment of departure he cannot hinder us from seeing, not his terrors, but the mercy of the Lord; he cannot hinder us at that moment from being finally assured that we shall not perish everlastingly.

Christ declareth himself to be before Abraham.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him:

and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

310. *The human sufferings and divine nature of Christ.*

The Jews supposed our Lord to be possessed of an evil spirit, because He assured them that whosoever would keep his saying, should never "see death," v. 51; or, as they here interpret it, should never "taste of death." This they saw clearly was making Himself to be greater than their father Abraham; for if this were true of those who should keep his saying, it must be true of Him who said it. And as Abraham and the prophets were dead, and many generations also who had heard their words, whom could our Lord mean to make Himself, they asked, if He made Himself greater than these greatest of men? "Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God." That Father who in the beginning created all things, that Father who inflicted all the judgments, and vouchsafed all the mercies recorded in the Old Testament, He it is of whom our Lord here declares Himself to be the Son; He it is by whom Christ is honoured; He it is of whom Jesus here asserts, "I know him, and keep his saying." What assurance have we here that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the very word and will of God! He both knew all that the Father would wish revealed, and kept exactly to the tenour of it! What a forcible motive also is here suggested towards keeping God's sayings! The Father will in like manner honour every son, who keeps his saying, who obeys his will.

But Christ would not have the Jews to be ignorant as to whom He meant to make Himself. He adds, therefore, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." This may mean, besides Abraham's seeing the day of Christ by faith, that he saw Christ in that divine person, who appeared to him, as the angel of the covenant that was made with him. For it led the Jews to reason, and our Lord seems to have meant them so to do, that Abraham must have actually seen Him face to face. It led them to answer with astonishment, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Not fifty years old; thus the Jews described Him from his appearance. Thus He seemed to them to be approaching towards fifty years of age, when in truth we know that He was at this time not thirty three. So literally was fulfilled in his outward bearing what Isaiah had beforehand written: "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." Isai. 52. 14.

Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Here He declares openly the great truth, to which his words had already pointed. He whom they saw in fashion as a man; He who as a man was of lowly birth, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," Isai. 53. 3; He against whom they took up stones to cast, and who hid Himself, in order to escape their malice; He was, and is, and is to be, before the prophets, before Abraham, before the world began, and when the world shall be no more. Marvellously did He conceal his glory, and hide as it were the majesty of the godhead under the veil of mortal flesh. Marvellously was the conviction of his divine nature resisted by the Jews, who heard his words, and saw his works. But let not us, to whom this truth is graciously revealed, let not us receive it with ingrateful hearts. Let not us, Lord, cast at Thee the stones of unbelief or disobedience, of sinful sin, or cold neglect of duty! Hide not, Lord, thyself from us! But dwell by thy Spirit in our hearts as in thy temple! Make us to rejoice that we see thy day; to see it, and be glad! Oh, who would not be glad, that sees with the eye of faith the day of Christ's first appearing, the day when angels sang from heaven, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men?" Luke 2. 14. Who would not be glad, that looks with hope for his second coming, that hopes to meet the Lord in glory, in the day when He shall say "unto them on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" Matt. 25. 34. Who would not be glad that thus might never taste of death? Who would not be glad, that thus might live with Christ for ever?

Christ giveth sight to a man that was born blind.

1 And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

3 *Jesus* answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

11 He answered and said, A man that is called *Jesus* made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

¹ Ch. 1. 9.

|| Or, spread the clay upon the eyes of the blind man.

§ 311. *How great a marvel is conversion unto Christ.*

The blindness of the man, whose case is here related, was not intended, as the Jews supposed, for a punishment of sin, either in himself or in his parents, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents." Not for his or their sins in particular did this blindness come to pass. "But that the works of God should be made manifest in him." This man came into the world in this condition, in consequence of the fall of all mankind, in token of the sinfulness of human nature, and in readiness to be an instance of that miraculous healing which God will now work by my hands. And here in he is a sign of that enlightening of the soul, which is the true giving of sight to the blind. For that this miracle may be thus spiritually interpreted, is evident, from its being thus applied by our Lord Himself, at the end of this chapter, saying, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Ver. 41.

First however of the blindness of the eyes, and of its not having been inflicted as a judgment for any particular sin in the sufferer. This sentence of our Lord's should check in us those hasty conclusions which we are apt to form, against those who are visited with very severe affliction. Rather let us consider all the ills we see, as the result of our common sinfulness. Let us note how they are permitted only for our common good. Let us view them as the trial of our faith and patience, if it please God that we suffer thus ourselves. If it be his will that we behold rather his visitations in our neighbours, let it stir up in us greater zeal for his honour, and greater concern for their welfare. Let us, like our Lord, give all diligence to work the works of Him that sent us hither. Let us labour to relieve want, to assuage pain, to console sorrow, to help infirmity. Let us overcome the evil that is in the world, with the good that is in the church. Let us make it come to pass, that the suffering which is in the world through sin, shall be less prominent than the comfort which is in the church through grace. And as "the night cometh when no man can work," let us lose no hour whilst it is yet to day, for making to shine "the light of the world," by the evidence of Christ working in our hearts true affection for all our fellow creatures. Such love would make us anxious above all things to administer to their spiritual necessities. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.)" This is nearly the same as the meaning of the name Shiloh, by which our Lord is described by the patriarch. Gen. 49. 10. And these words may therefore well turn our thoughts to the fountain of our Saviour's blood. To this pool of Siloam we may well apply the words of the prophet, "Wash, and be clean." 2 Kings 5. 13. To this we may come, and invite others, when we are made aware of being blind; and wash, and go away seeing.

And now observe what a stir was made among the neighbours by this recovery of sight to the blind. At first they doubted among themselves whether it could be possibly the same man, so great was the change made in him by the miracle. "Some said, This is he; others said, He is like him; but he said, I am he." And is there not at least as much to marvel at, in that change of life from sin to holiness, which is sure to come with conversion of heart? And ought we not much more, in such a case, to give God the glory, through whose grace this great work is wrought? And might we not, in all the sin we see around us, thus rejoice to think that God's work may be made manifest? that good may be made to triumph over evil? For what is the seeing after being blind, compared with believing after sinful unbelief? What is to have become sensible of the outward world, to discern sun and moon and earth, houses and trees and water; what is this compared with knowledge of things heavenly, in a soul from which they have before been hidden? what compared with the hope of salvation, instead of a fearful looking for of endless misery?

God make us to rejoice in witnessing this change in others! God make us eager to have it wrought, thankful to have had it wrought, within ourselves!

The man that was made to see is brought before the Pharisees.

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until

they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

§ 312. *That we must be ready to speak for each other.*

We have here further particulars of what happened to the man born blind, whom our Lord had made to see. "They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind." This might have been done by friends, in order to convince them of the miracle. Or it may have been done by enemies of Christ, in order to bring Him into trouble. For the Pharisees were very jealous of any work being done on the sabbath day, whether good or evil. "And it was the sabbath day, when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes." In many cases it seems as if our Lord had preferred that day, for his works of mercy. And in this He probably designed to teach us, that to do good is a fit employment of the Christian sabbath. Let us endeavour that it may become amongst us a day for recovering of sight to the blind. Let it be a day in which we labour to get knowledge of things heavenly; in which we help, according to our ability, to impart of what little we know ourselves, unto those who know still less.

The Pharisees, before whom the blind man was brought, were unwilling to believe the miracle. Some objected that Jesus must be a sinner, because He observed not, as they required, the sabbath day. Others allowed that no sinner could do so great a miracle. And yet these probably doubted whether the miracle had been done. For they must be reckoned among those who did not believe that the man had been born blind.
 was a division among

Would that this were never the case with those also who profess to hold the truth and love it! Would that this were never the case with the friends, as well as with the enemies, of the Gospel! Would that this were never the case amongst those who are members of the same outward visible communion! Much need we all have to remember that a house divided against itself cannot stand; See Mark 3. 25; that a church so divided cannot prosper. Nor is it otherwise with each single family. In order to prosper in our spiritual proficiency, nothing is more helpful than for all to be of one mind, all united in one work and labour of love, to do all the good we can to each other, and by each other's help, to all mankind.

"What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?" This is what the Jews asked the man who had been blind. What opinion has this wrought in thee? "He said, He is a prophet;" meaning, some one sent from God, divinely inspired, authorized by these signs and wonders, to teach the will of God to man. This was far from the answer they desired. So they next sent for the parents, in the hope of making out that the man had not really been born blind. Their unwillingness to believe has thus furnished us with the best of all testimony to the fact. And this has been the case with objectors to the Gospel in all ages. They have themselves furnished testimony to the genuineness of the Scriptures. For if it were not for such objections, no such great care would continually be taken to preserve all the necessary proofs. Thus the parents here expressly testify; "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind." On this point they could not be mistaken. On this they were not afraid to answer truly.

But further they were unwilling to answer; observing prudently, that their son was of age to speak for himself. Prudently they thus replied, as the world reckons prudence; which is to secure one's self, at all risk of harm to others. But it would ill become a Christian parent thus to shift the danger on a son. It would ill become any Christian thus to shift any evil on his neighbour. Let us speak for each other freely, whensoever by so speaking we can help each other, or save each other from risk or harm. Let us speak for each other, and suffer for each other; even as Christ has spoken in our behalf, even as He has borne for us not only risk and suffering, but a most painful death.

The Pharisees further examine the man that had been blind.

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for

this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they || cast him out.

|| Or, excommunicated him.

§ 313. *The right means of conviction.*

How anxious are the Pharisees to perplex this poor man that had been blind, and to explain away the miracle of his obtaining his sight! How diligent are the wicked in evil doing! how slothful in well doing are they that labour after good! But how great is the advantage which truth gives, even to one that had hitherto been blind, against the most sharp-sighted of his questioners! All things which he sees around him are new to his awakened sense. The council chamber where the Jewish rulers are assembled, their state, their dress, their countenances, all these things now almost for the first time seen, how powerfully must they work upon his mind, how greatly tend to fill him with awe and confusion! Yet, in reply to their repeated assertion that Jesus was a sinner, he repeated the great fact which could not be denied: "whereas I was blind, now I see."

Facts then are the best proof of principles. What a man does is the most sure sign of what he is. Or, as St. John expresses it in his first epistle, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." 1 John 3. 7. Nor must any pretence of giving God the praise prevent us from acknowledging with thankfulness the benefits which we receive from our fellow-creatures. Though we are as sure that they are sinners as that Christ was righteous, if yet they have helped us either to see, to know, or to enjoy, it would be the height of hypocrisy to withhold from them the praise we owe, on the ground of giving to God all the glory. The true way to praise God is to be at once thankful unto Him, and to those whom He has moved to be kind and useful. Without Him they could do no one good thing. And whilst for every thing that is good we give thanks to Him, we must give each other also credit for being influenced by the love of Him, in all the benefits and kindnesses we see conferred.

When the Jews repeated their question, now Christ had made the blind man see, he answered them, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?" This he asked perhaps in earnest, thinking from their many questions that they wished to become acquainted with the truth. They however were affronted at the supposition. "Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples." Thus some also amongst professing Christians would be affronted at being taken for disciples indeed; would be sorry that it should be thought that they inquire into truth, with a view to the saving of their souls. So easily are men ashamed before each other! so fearless of that disgrace which awaits them before God! so forgetful of what He long ago has said by the prophet; "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed!" 1 Sam. 2. 30.

And see now how out of the mouth of this blind man God could direct against the Pharisees a profitable reproof! See how utterly unable they were to reply by reason to the argument he so forcibly urged, that if Jesus were not of God, He could not have opened the eyes of one born blind! All they could say was to revile the man that had been blind, and to reproach him with his infirmity, now so happily removed. All they could do was to persecute him wrongfully, unjustly to cast him out from their communion. In what a hateful light does this history represent the practice of persecution, when applied instead of the convictions of reason, whether to the furtherance of error, or of truth! Let us resolve that we will never use interest or force, when we ought to use persuasion or the power of example. By words of gentleness, and arguments of truth, let us appeal to the consciences of those who differ from us; and by these means not seek to cast them out, but, if possible, compel them to come in. For we may often take a lesson in point of zeal, from those who are active in doing evil. The diligence which is shewn in the gainsaying of the Gospel may teach us how we should be diligent in upholding it. And the eagerness with which men cast out of their society those who are a reproof to their evil deeds, should move in us like eagerness to join unto our company all from whom we may derive edification, or who might derive edification from us.

Christ reproveth the Pharisees.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

39 And Jesus said, for judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

§ 314. *To say we see aggravates our sin.*

When the Jews could not prevail upon the man that had been blind in any way to underrate the mercy he had received, or to deny the Lord who had wrought his cure, "they cast him out;" rejected him from their synagogue, from their religious communion, as a church. But "Jesus heard that they had cast him out." And for the sufferer, what greater consolation could there be than thus to be kindly sought for and noticed by his Lord? Let us remember, for our support, if in any matter we are persecuted for conscience sake, Jesus hears of it. He hears of it; and if He hear that we bear our wrongs with meekness, and requite our injuries with prayer, He will find us, and give us comfort in our sorrows, even help, and peace, and safety. But on the other hand, let us also be aware, that if we proudly imagine ourselves to be wronged, when in truth we meet with no worse than we deserve; if we fret, and repine, and murmur, and magnify to ourselves the evils we endure; Jesus hears of it. He knows our pride and perversity of heart; and for the trouble which these bring upon our heads, we must expect no consolation at his hands.

And here observe the kind of comfort which our Lord offered, to one who had really suffered in his behalf. "When he had found him." Behold then He of Himself sought him out! Behold how in this instance were fulfilled the words of the prophet; "I am found of them that sought me not." Isai. 65. 1. "When he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And when the man expressed his willingness to believe, if he but knew whom, our Lord explained Himself by saying, "It is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." The most sweet then of all consolation is to have true faith in the Son of God imparted to us. The best of all resources in our afflictions, is to exercise our souls in devotion to our Lord. To believe, and to worship Him; these are things which we can do, these are gifts which we can enjoy, whether cast out or allowed our place in society, whether despised or respected, whether persecuted or cherished by mankind. And if we freely exercise these gifts, if we largely partake of these graces, how deeply shall we feel that all "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us!" Rom. 8. 18. How greatly shall we rejoice to think, that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" 2 Cor. 4. 17.

And now let us lay to heart the solemn sentence, with which our Lord reproves the whole conduct of the Jewish council, in their treatment of this man, whose eyes He had opened. "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." As the man in question had been privileged to receive his eyesight, so would many be recovered by Christ's coming, from spiritual darkness to spiritual light. Whilst on the contrary, many who like the Pharisees had all their senses perfect, and conceived themselves also to have knowledge more excellent than their brethren, these would become blind, these would, for their pride and obstinacy, be given up to spiritual blindness, to an incapacity for seeing and knowing what Christ has revealed in the Gospel. The Pharisees easily understood that these words were directed against themselves. If amongst us there be any whom they might serve to reprove, may we have grace to understand and to apply them! May we consider, whilst we yet have time, how much greater is the sin of those who say they see, how much greater, and how much more abiding! "Now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." For how can it help remaining if we repent not? And how can we repent, if we are not conscious of transgression, not aware that so far as we are without God's grace, we are blind in all things spiritual? Ignorance, when unavoidable, is some excuse for sin. But if we boast of being well informed, we stand condemned out of our own mouths.

Never let us proudly say, We see; but humbly own, that in respect of God, we are no better than born blind; and humbly pray, that for the sake of Jesus Christ, it will please Him to give us sight.

Christ is the door of the sheep, and the shepherd of the sheep.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

§ 315. *The fruits of coming unto God through Christ.*

Every word spoken by Jesus Christ must be certain truth. When therefore He adds to what He says, such words as, "Verily, verily," we may conclude that the truth spoken is one which requires more than common attention, or one which was likely to meet with more than common unbelief. Twice does our Lord use this expression in the parable of the sheepfold. Let us therefore give to this subject most earnest heed. Let us take more pains than ever, both to know and to believe what is here revealed for our instruction.

The parable seems to refer to the case of sheep put for a time into a strange sheepfold, as for instance, when brought to market, or when prepared for sacrifice in the temple. The porter means the person who was put in charge of them by the owner, and who was ready to deliver them at the door, whenever the owner should require it. A thief or robber would enter in some other way, and not by the door. And as for the stranger, though he should enter by the door, the sheep would not follow him; "for they know not the voice of strangers." This is usually the case with dumb animals, that they can distinguish those who have the care of them. And this distinction would be still more remarkable in a country, where it was the practice, as in Judaea and throughout the East, for the shepherd not to drive his sheep, but to go first whilst they followed him.

This parable our Lord applies to Himself in two ways: first, He likens Himself to the door of the sheepfold; and next to the shepherd of the sheep, as opposed to thieves and robbers. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." Christ is the way by which alone we can find admission into the kingdom of heaven. We might labour all our life long by other means in vain; as much in vain as sheep striving to go in or out at any other part, whilst this way is made on purpose for their use. "I am the door of the sheep." Christ is the way of life to Christians. In Christ they must put their trust, in Christ, and in his death. By his word they must guide their thoughts and words and works. Not by any method of their own devising must they hope to obtain salvation, but only by the door opened to them in Jesus Christ. "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." As sheep by entering in at the door, are protected in the fold, protected both from thieves and from the wild beasts, which in Judaea used to infest the flocks; so Christians who walk by faith in Christ, are guarded against the assaults of their spiritual foe, that foe who desires to steal away their souls, who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. And as sheep through the door are led to pasture, so Christians by means of Christ, and by the grace which He has revealed, are strengthened and refreshed, "filled with the fruits of righteousness," Phil. 1. 11, "filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. 3. 19. If then we have heretofore in many things erred and strayed like lost sheep, from the fold of Almighty God, let us return by the way which He has pointed out, into the arms of his parental love.

But, secondly, our Lord here shews that He is the Shepherd of the sheep, as opposed to thieves and robbers. "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them." And again, "the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." False teachers have abounded in the world, both before and after our Saviour's coming. Such were they who taught the heathen to profess themselves to be wise, whereby they became fools. See Rom. 1. 22. Such were Theudas and Judas, spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, 5. 36, 37, as having drawn after them much people. Such are the pretenders to inspiration, who in our own times often delude the unstable and unwary. But the end of all such teaching as this is death. Whilst the fruit of the teaching of Jesus Christ is that we both have life, and have it more abundantly. Here we have grace, and hereafter heaven. Here we have all needful for our protection and support, and hereafter more than we can now conceive, more than we can now desire.

Christ is the good Shepherd.

11 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the

Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; ²and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, ³because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. ⁴This commandment have I received of my Father.

¹ Isa. 40, 11. Ezek. 34, 23.

² Ezek. 37, 22.

³ Isa. 53, 7, 8.

⁴ Acts 2, 24.

§ 316. *Unity in Religion.*

From the account which has before been given of the sheepfold, our Lord here draws another description of Himself; "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." This was the case frequently in a country, where the sheep were liable to the encounter of wild beasts, and where the shepherd must either fly or expose himself to death. In such a case a hireling would be sure to run away. One who served for hire and for hire only, one who had no due regard for the interest of his employer, no concern in his own heart for the safety of the sheep, would fly away upon seeing the wolf approach. This is one "whose own the sheep are not." This is such an one as often must occur amongst those pastors who are in the place of Christ; and who, though charged with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, are still subject to the infirmities of sinful men. For it is the feeling as if the sheep belonged to him, it is the feeling the same interest in the sheep, in his master's behalf, as if they were his own, this alone can induce a man to defend them from danger of the enemy, at all risk of harm to himself.

This then is the case of Christ and his sheep. "I know," saith He, "my sheep, and am known of mine." They are his, for He has purchased them to Himself, by his own blood. They are his; for in order, that they might be his, He has laid down his life for them! This is the love which our Shepherd has had for us! What then should be the love we feel for Him! Thus has He cared for us! How ought we most deeply to care for Him! How ought we to listen to his voice, to follow Him, to walk in the ways which He has set before us, to know Him, to know Him for our Shepherd, and to know ourselves for the sheep of his pasture! And how, above all, ought we, as his sheep, to labour for that object which He here proposes, that as there is one Shepherd, so there should be one fold!

It was of the Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews, that Christ here said, "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." It is, to the heathen, aye, and to the Jews also, as distinct from the Christians, that we may still apply the same words of promise, for our encouragement in attempting their conversion. And would that Christians had no need first to apply this saying, to the distinctions which still prevail amongst themselves! Would that all, and especially preachers of the Gospel, felt how greatly it would help, if they could agree amongst each other, towards the world believing that Christ had sent them! See ch. 17. 18. Would that they who esteem themselves to be sheep of Christ, would endeavour without ceasing to be all of one fold! And if this seem to be impossible, let us remember that it is no more so, than that all should be honest, all sober, or all pure. In many things we must strive after that which is impossible, that we may reach as near to it as we possibly can. It is possible for more to be sober than we are now. It is possible for more than are now to be of one mind. It is possible for us all to be better agreed than we are now as to Christian truth, nearer to one communion, and more of us in one. Thus the thing for which we really strive is possible, even to be nearer than we are now to that unity of spirit, which is perhaps in this world unattainable.

And here we may see set forth, as an encouragement towards our union of heart and mind, that unity which subsists between the Father and the Son. For immediately, after saying that there should be one fold as there is one shepherd, our Lord adds: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." And this He says He did of Himself. And yet He tells us, that He received it as a commandment of the Father. Like to this is the great secret of unity among Christians; to do what is right of our own will, and yet at the same time to do it in deference to authority. It is to have our will thus conformed to the will of those who are thus set over us in the Lord, yea, to the will of Him whose ministers they are. It is to have liberty; and yet freely to choose subjection as better than licentiousness. It is to judge for ourselves; and yet to come to the conclusion, that it is best to judge in all things according to those commandments which we have received of God.

Christ at the feast of the dedication.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

22 And it was at Jerusalem the 'feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou || make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

¹ 1 Mac. 4. 59.

|| Or, hold us in suspense?

§ 317. *The unity of the Father and the Son.*

The division among the Jews at the sayings of our Lord may suggest to us this useful reflection as to differences in religious opinion; namely, that such differences, however numerous, however wide, however widely spread abroad amongst mankind, should not make us apprehend that there is either uncertainty or obscurity in the truths disputed. Here is a case of dispute in which all are now agreed as to the force of one argument, and the folly of the other. "Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" is an argument which seems to be unanswerable. Its force was no less cogent in the days when there were so many who saw the miracles of Jesus, and yet concluded "He hath a devil, and is mad." Thus it is in many matters, whether of doctrine or of practice, which are disputed in the present generation. The right is as distinct from the wrong, the truth is as far apart from falsehood; though we cannot agree as to which is which. It has been a thing perhaps undisputed in the primitive church; or it will be seen clearly perhaps hereafter amongst ourselves. It might therefore be seen now by us; if only we would search for it without prejudice or passion, with diligence, and zeal, and love.

And this active search for truth, this charitable allowance for error, this union of eagerness to be right, with compassion for them that are out of the way, these appear to be the very duties which God does in this matter require at our hands, the very good which it is his pleasure to promote, out of the prevalence of all those evil dissensions, which have been permitted in the Christian community. For thus it was in the time of our Lord's appearance upon the earth. The Jews would gladly have had Jesus tell them, whether He were indeed the Christ. But He chose rather to teach them, by a way which should put to task their diligence in inquiry, their charitable forbearance with the convictions of each other, and their patient submission to each other's persecution. "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." That is to say, He had before provided an answer to this question, by appealing to his miracles, and to all the circumstances of his life, for proof that He was the Christ. See ch. 5. 36. And this was a proof which required both pains and good will on their part, for them to be convinced by it. And because they were not ~~thus~~ his sheep, therefore they believed not. For his sheep, as He had before described them, were such as heard his voice, and were known by Him, and were apt to follow Him.

See how urgent is the necessity of our obeying our Lord; even as necessary this is, as that we should be known of Him! And see how great is the advantage of thus preferring light to darkness, thus choosing with all the will we have, to follow Christ! "I give unto them eternal life." This is what Christ gives to such sheep as these. "And they shall never perish." Though they die, they shall not die eternally. No one, neither man nor evil spirit, shall prevail to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. No one shall pluck them out of the Father's hand. The Father and Christ are one. This lies at the very foundation of our Christian hopes. The Father which has given us to Christ is greater than all; so that He can compass all that He desires. And the Father and Christ are One; so that what Christ desires, the Father doeth. It is not the will of the Father that any of his sheep should perish. And it has been the object of Christ in dying for the sheep, that they should all live for ever. The Father and Christ are one. They are one God. They are One in power, and in majesty, and glory. They are one in wisdom, One in greatness, One in goodness. They are One in settled purpose to save mankind through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. They are One with each other, and One with the Holy Ghost, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Oh, never may we feel to adore these three in One! Never may we cease to hold fast by the profession of this truth once delivered to the saints! Never may we refuse in this or in any other divine truth, to hear the voice of the great Shepherd of our souls, to know as we are known of Him, and to follow as He has led the way!

Christ answereth the Jews who would have stoned Him.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

34 Jesus answered them, ¹Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest;

because I said, I am the Son of God?

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,

40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

42 And many believed on him there.

¹ Ps. 82. 6.

§ 318. *That we must believe in Christ as God.*

When our Lord had given a true answer to the inquiry of the Jews, they "took up stones again to stone him." But as they opposed the truth by violence, so He met their violence with gentleness, and with reasonable remonstrance. "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" It was from the Father then that the works of Christ proceeded. And yet it was Christ Himself who shewed them, who wrought them among the Jews. And this must be true in like manner of these good works of ours, which it is our duty to make manifest to all beholders. They must be our own doing. And they must be wrought in us by the working of God's Holy Spirit. Our hands must do that which is good, our lips must speak, our hearts must think, as Christ has ordered. And yet not we, but Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith; not we, but the Father which is with us; not we, but the Holy Spirit which helpeth our infirmities; He it is, even God, which giveth all good gifts, which doeth all good deeds. Unto Him be all the praise and glory!

The Jews, by way of defending themselves, replied, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." This shews how the Jews interpreted our Lord's saying, "I and my Father are one." Ver. 30. And now observe how He justified his expression; first reasoning with them according to their own notions, and afterwards setting forth the full evidence of the truth. According to their own notions, if at least they well remembered the words of their own Scriptures, they might have borne with Him, if He had applied the name of God to some one else, besides the eternal Father. For thus it was written in the Psalms, 82. 6. "I said, Ye are gods:" in which case the name appears to have been applied to those who should "die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Ps. 82. 7. Much more, our Lord argues, might He whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world, take to Himself this name without offence to the Jews.

But further, He laid claim to the appellation on far higher ground, than they could to whom it was given in the Psalms. He gave proof by his works of his being in the Father, and the Father in Him. Thus He again asserted his divine nature. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." How suitably may we hereupon reflect for ourselves, that if we would be taken for real Christians, if we would have our character for faithfulness made profitable for the conviction of our neighbours, we must do the works of God, we must do the works which Christ has revealed from the Father, on purpose for us to walk therein. And for the same object, out of a desire to be more useful in our generation to the cause we have in hand, we are here instructed by the example of our Lord, that we must avoid rather than court the persecution of the ungodly. The truth we must not fear to tell, the whole truth we must at all risks boldly profess; the whole truth as it is in Jesus. See Eph. 4. 21. But if in doing so we give offence, let us escape, if it be possible, from the wrath of the offended. Let us save from their malice, whether it be our life, or character, or property, that they attack: let us save whatever may serve to give us salutary influence in helping to make others believe. For this is an object worth all our risk and all our care; this as a duty is one of the first we have in this world to discharge, the making men to glorify our Father, which is in heaven.

God give us grace that we may ourselves believe, and that we may help to forward the salvation of our brethren! God help us to uphold our faith in Christ, that He is One with the Father, and One with the Holy Ghost! God make us to shew forth the true faith by a holy practice! and to do always through the Spirit the works of the Father, in proof that we are believers in the Son!

Christ heareth of Lazarus being sick.

1 Now a certain *man* was sick, *named Lazarus*, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 ('*It was that Mary* which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sister sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

7 Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judæa again.

8 *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

9 Jesus answered, Are there not *twelve* hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

¹ Matt. 26. 7.

§ 319. *That those whom God loves are often made to wait.*

There can be little doubt that Lazarus, whose sickness is here mentioned, was one of our Lord's most faithful disciples. Else Martha and Mary would not have presumed to send this message in his behalf: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Here therefore we may take occasion to remark, that the best of men are liable, no less than the worst, to the visitation of severe disease. And this should serve to restrain in our thoughts, any reflection on those who suffer from grievous sickness, as if this were a signal judgment from the Almighty upon the sins of the persons suffering. And also it should help to convince us, that God has in store for those whom He chiefly loves, and these are they who most love Him, a world where all such evils shall be more than made up for; where for them which shall be saved, through Jesus Christ, there shall be no sickness, no suffering, no weariness, no woe. Glad then we should be to be sick with Lazarus, if Christ will but give us health; thankful to suffer with our Lord Himself, if with Him we may safely trust that we shall be "also glorified together." Rom. 8. 17.

Lazarus is very particularly described, both by the town where he resided, and by his sisters; of whom one became particularly notable by the anointing of the feet of Jesus. See ch. 12. 3. This exact description was the more important in so signal a miracle, as this following, in order that every one might be better certified by inquiry, among the friends and neighbours of him that was recovered. And further, not only is Lazarus described to our Lord as "he whom thou lovest," but St. John adds in confirmation of this account, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." So that there could be no doubt about the whole family being the one to which our Lord often resorted, as it was also one which He had enlightened by his teaching, honoured by his presence, and which He was now about to comfort in affliction, by the most gracious and abundant help.

Immediately after the mention of Jesus loving Lazarus, it is added, "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." He loves, and yet He stays away. He stays away two whole days, from the friend whom He loves, when that friend was sick. See then here how it is consistent with God's loving us, for Him not at once to grant our petitions; even those which we put up with faith most earnest, with desire most sincere. He may be loving us most entirely, as Christ loved Lazarus, and yet not at once think fit to heal the sickness we deplore, to give us the health we pray for. He may love us, as Christ loved Martha and Mary, and yet take from us the friend we most esteem, the brother whom we most affectionately regard. He may love us, and yet bar against our wishes the way we most long to enter, the life we most desired to lead. He may love us, and yet deprive us of the things we most enjoy, or refuse us the opportunity to do the good, which we think most needful to be done. Let us wait therefore always his good time; not doubting that He hears with kind regard all prayers, which are duly offered in our Saviour's name. And let us endeavour whilst we wait, so to wait with patience, so to pray with zeal, so to work with love, that our waiting may minister to the ends God has in view, his greater glory, and our own greater good.

Though Christ waited for a time beyond Jordan, where He received the news of Lazarus' sickness, He set forth in due season to go into Judæa again. And though his disciples reminded Him how the Jews sought to stone Him, He answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" That is, are we not bound, when the proper time for any duty is arrived, to do it at all risk of inconvenience to ourselves? Let us walk then in the day; and according to the light which Christ has given us, let us work whilst it is called to day. And as he who walks forth in the sunshine is less likely to stumble, whilst he enjoys the light of this world, than he who ventures out in the dark; so shall we, if we undertake no enterprise, except under the direction of our blessed Lord, both better be kept from falling, and if we fall, be more sure to be lifted up.

Christ goeth to Bethany, where Lazarus is dead.

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, || about fifteen furlongs off:

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and

|| That is, about two miles.

Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

¹ Luke 14. 14. ch. 5. 29.

² ch. 6. 35.

§ 320. *Christ the resurrection and the life.*

Our Lord speaks of the death of Lazarus as though it were sleep. And so He had said before of the ruler's daughter, whom He recovered from death, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Matt. 9. 24. In both cases, He may have meant to imply, that the death under which they then suffered should last but for a short time, and that He would again awaken them to life. But in both cases we may consider that He further signified of death in general, that it is not the end of our existence; but only a change in our manner of living, a sleep as far as this world is concerned, an awakening of the soul into the world of eternity. "Our friend Lazarus, sleepeth." Death then cannot sever us from the love of Christ. In death we are still called his friends. In death we may still love and be beloved. In death therefore, though we sleep we live. Lord, when thus we sleep, may it be our happiness to rest in Thee! Lord, when like Lazarus we die, be Thou our Friend, and we shall live for ever!

When Jesus told the disciples plainly that Lazarus was dead, He added, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." It seemed strange, that when Jesus heard that Lazarus whom He loved was sick, He should stay two whole days in the place where He then was. Ver. 6. Here we see that this was good for the disciples; it was helpful to the increase of their faith. If God gives not, or does not, at once what we expect of Him, not only is this consistent with his love for us, it may also be in furtherance of his designs for the good of our brethren. It may help in some manner, though we know not how, towards the increase of holiness and love amongst our neighbours; if our prayers for a time are not granted, if the health which we desire be for a time deferred. God hears, though He seems as though He heard not. Christ comes in due season to all who seek Him faithfully, He comes as to the grave of Lazarus, bringing life, and health, and salvation.

We learn from the words of Thomas, that this errand of our Lord was full of danger to Himself. This was by reason of the place being so near to Jerusalem, "about fifteen furlongs," nearly two miles off. Many Jews were also present at Bethany, who had come to Martha, and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. And these, though their intention to the sisters was kind, were likely to be full of enmity against Christ. So easy is it, so common amongst ourselves, for a man to be humane to his fellow creatures, and yet not to feel love towards his Saviour. It is well in our afflictions to have the sympathy of friends. But chiefly we should rejoice if the comfort which they offer be Christian consolation. And chiefly we should be comforted, if we may hope that He Himself is with us, He who is "the resurrection and the life."

What a name is this which our Lord here assumes; what a description which He here gives of Himself: "I am the resurrection, and the life!" This He says He is Himself. And so He had said before, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." Ch. 5. 21. And who these are we here may learn: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." To believe then in Christ, this is to live. Believers, these are they whom He wills to quicken. And they who thus live, these shall never die. Let us each then ask ourselves this solemn question of our Lord: "Believest thou this?" Let us remember that as on our faith depends our practice, so there depends on it also, if it bring forth good fruit, no less than this, that we should never die.

Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief. See Mark 9. 24. Lord, we "believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world!" Make Thou our faith lively, that we may believe effectually! Make Thou our faith fruitful, that we may obey abundantly! That we may live by faith on earth, and through faith may, when we die, awake up in glory.

Christ weepeth.

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

29 As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and

saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, † and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

† Gr. *he troubled himself.*

¹ ch. 9. 6.

§ 321. *Christian tears.*

On a previous occasion there appeared to be in Martha, as compared with Mary, some deficiency of interest in things spiritual. See Luke 10. 41, 42. Here we see how both, with equal zeal, or Martha, if there were any difference, with the most, pressed forward to meet Christ on his approach. So well had she profited by his previous admonition. So effectually had she learned from the divine Teacher, that one thing, and one only, is needful. Would that we also, in the meantime, since we read that important lesson, may have been inwardly digesting, and practically applying it! Would that we may have chosen, or even now may choose, the good part, which shall not be taken away from us! Would that whatever evil visits us, we may be ever forward, with either sister, to come to our blessed Lord for help!

“Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.” By these words we see how great was Mary’s faith in the power of Christ to heal the sick. Yet it scarcely seems to have occurred to her that He might be able to raise the dead. - Not only able, but also willing, in many things, is our Lord, to do more than we desire, as well as more than we deserve, nay, more also than we imagine to be possible. Let us ascribe to Him all power we can conceive. And we shall experience at his hand all help we need. Let us believe that through his blessing on our prayers, we might not only be protected oftentimes from disease and death, but always from disobedience and sin. And then, though we should be sick, the visitation would turn to our endless profit. Then, though we were to die, our death would be no other than the entering into an inheritance eternal in the heavens.

And yet though He has thus all power in heaven and in earth, see Matt. 28. 18, when He saw Mary weeping, ‘and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.’ Such was the feeling which He had for our infirmities! Such was the sympathy which He manifested for our sorrows! “Jesus wept.” He was man, at the same time that He was God. He was liable to our weaknesses, affected by our feelings, and kindly affectioned to the most lowly of our fellow creatures. “Jesus wept.” When they pointed out to Him the grave of Lazarus whom He loved, when they stood around Him weeping, both his enemies and his friends, He shed tears like unto their own. “Jesus wept.” It is then no part of our duty not to grieve for the sorrows of those we love, for the death of those with whom we have been used to live. “Jesus wept.” We too may weep; we may weep for death; we must weep for sin; we must weep to think how it is offensive towards God, how it is pregnant with misery to man. “Jesus wept.” But his tears were not without their consolation. We too must take care that we sorrow not even as others which have no hope; see 1 Thess. 4. 13; but rather as they who believe that through Him and through his mercy, our tears shall be dried up, and our mourning shall be turned into joy.

“Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!” This was the just and charitable reflection of men who could acknowledge kindness in one whom they disliked. “And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?” This we fear was the remark of evil unbelief, the shaft of censure and of scorn directed against the man they hated. The same event which seems in some to have softened prejudice, in others gave rise to the expression of contempt. The same tears of Jesus which some acknowledged for a token of affection, were made by others the occasion of a slighting remark, on his weakness and inability to heal. Ever let us interpret either tears or smiles the least for evil that we can. Ever let us believe the most we can for good, of all that we witness in our brethren. Ever let us in all things follow after that charity, which even of our enemies, “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” 1 Cor. 13. 6.

Christ raiseth Lazarus.

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

§ 322. *Spiritual resurrection.*

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is considered, with good reason, to be one of the most signal miracles of our Lord. Here we have not only disease subdued, but death. Here we have not death only, but also corruption, vanquished. Lazarus had been dead four days. This was long enough in such a climate as Judæa for great progress to be made in that loathsome change, which every one of us must expect our flesh to undergo. If the very words which describe the symptoms of this change sound necessarily offensive to our ears, how much more must the reality be dreadful! And how should this consideration repress in us all pride in bodily strength or beauty, all excessive care for bodily comfort, all vain indulgence in bodily pleasure. The outward frame, for the sake of which we entertain these feelings, or desire these indulgences, must moulder in corruption. In the grave they lie, the bodies of those whom we have loved on earth, in the dark and lonesome grave; saying "to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." Job 17. 14. In the grave we must thus lie ourselves; unless indeed, as we daily pray, Christ's kingdom first shall come; unless, as we ought most earnestly to hope, we first shall meet the Lord in glory.

This interment of the perishable body is a fearful thing for the mind to dwell upon. But the more it is so, we should be the more thankful to find, that our Lord has ability and will to renew the corrupted form, to give to dishonour glory, to raise the mortal to immortality. Of this power, and of his readiness to exert it, we may conceive Him to have given us some foretaste, in the raising of Lazarus from the grave. And not only power did our Lord here manifest, in his readiness to comply with a desire to this effect, but He gave proof also of strong desire on his part, to raise up those who are taken captive by death. For why else did He groan within Himself, if it were not for the concern He felt in his friend's decease? And has He not called all his disciples friends? Nay, has He not done more for them than either friend or brother, even laid down his life for their sakes? For ourselves then let us believe that He anxiously desires to raise us from corruption to incorruption. In us, and in our salvation at the last day, He would have the assembled world to behold the glory of God. In our behalf He would give thanks unto the Father. And to us He would rejoice to say, as we lie bound in the darkness of the grave, to us He would rejoice to say, as He did to Lazarus; "Come forth."

"And he that was dead came forth." Harken, ye dead that are in the graves; hearken, and hope! Harken, ye dead in trespasses and sins, who yet live, but are near to die eternally, hearken, and believe; hearken, and repent; hearken, and instantly amend! Cast away the graveclothes ye are bound with hand and foot, the bondage of sinful practices, which constrain your souls yet further to transgress! Cast away the veil of worldly wisdom, that spiritual ignorance, which allows not of your seeing the presence of your Lord and Saviour. Loose you. Be free. Be ready to depart. Come from the haunts where you have used to sin. Come from the friends who have enticed you to iniquity. Come to Him who has set open the doors of your captivity. Come forth, and follow Christ. It was in a dark and loathsome cavern that you were spending the years of sin. "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." A weight which no strength of yours could move, would have constrained you to continue in transgression. At the command of Christ the stone has been removed. The cave is open. The path is clear. And the voice of your Saviour invites, entreats, commands, "Lazarus, come forth." God be praised, that voice is heard! God be thanked, that not only are the dead raised up, but the wicked also are converted and live. God be glorified, that for every one who is turned from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, there are others also who see, and seeing believe, and believing are saved through Jesus Christ!

Christ's death is prophesied by Caiaphas.

47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

50 ¹ Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that

were scattered abroad.

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

¹ ch. 18. 14.

§ 323. *That Christ died for all men.*

The chief priests and Pharisees in their council that they held together, acknowledged that our Lord wrought many miracles. "What do we?" said they, "for this man doeth many miracles." Their question, "What do we?" means, what have we done hitherto, what ought we to do now under these circumstances? Their conclusion evidently should have been, We ought immediately to believe. But instead of truth and faith, they considered only their worldly interest. They feared lest, if many others were to believe, the Romans would be jealous of the sovereignty of Christ, and would come and take away their place and nation. Such is the common calculation of a worldly mind; not, what ought I in all reason to do? not, what am I convinced reasonably must be right for me to do? but, what shall I gain or what lose, by doing this thing which I am convinced is right? And the frequent result of such reasoning is this; men bring down upon themselves, as did the Jews in this instance, that very evil which by these wicked means they would avert. Oh, that all such reasoners would well consider, "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!" Matt. 16. 26. Oh, that they would lay to heart how worthless in the comparison are all the glories of this present life, when set against what we hope for in eternity!

In this evil consultation of the Jewish rulers, they were urged by Caiaphas the high priest to put our Lord without delay to death. For it was expedient, he argued, that one man should die for the people. By which he probably meant that they ought to feel no scruple in putting Christ to death, however innocent he might be, provided it would be conducive to the public peace. For this is a notion not uncommon amongst mankind, that practices may be justified by public policy, which would be sinful in private conduct. As if Christ had left one Gospel for individuals, and another for communities! As if they that bear rule, and all men in proportion as they have influence in the state, were not bound to exercise their power, on the same principles of justice, mercy, and truth, which ought to regulate their behaviour to each other!

But whatever Caiaphas himself might mean, he spake these words not of himself. That is to say, they had a meaning other than he intended; they were a prophecy, put into his mouth by the Holy Spirit of God. It was God's will therefore which was here set forth. It was God's will that one man, and He not man only, but also God, even Christ, it was God's will that Christ should die for that nation. "And not for that nation only but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Thus we learn that Christ died for the nation of the Jews, not for some few of them, but for all. And so of other nations, and of the whole world, for all He died; all would He have to be saved, through his blood; all would He gather into one, scattered abroad as all are; all would He make to become children of God.

The counsel of Caiaphas was agreed to. It was determined by the Jews to put Jesus to death. "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews." Though willing to lay down his life, He desired not to provoke the malice of his enemies; and He continued in a remote part of the country until the Jews' passover was nigh at hand. As this feast approached whilst many of the people anxiously inquired whether He were likely to appear at Jerusalem, the rulers had given orders, "that if any man knew where He were, he should shew it, that they might take him." Thus it is also in the festivals celebrated amongst Christians; whilst some of us are anxious in each ordinance of the Church to discern the presence of the Lord, others abuse these holy seasons by such practices of sinful intemperance, as amount to crucifying the Son of God afresh. Never may we so violate the will of our blessed Lord! Never may we so fail to profit by the times which are set apart for commemoration of his love! Never may we forget the love of Him who died for all our sins! Never may we neglect one chief object of his dying, that we should sin no more!

Christ cometh to Bethany, supbeth with Lazarus.

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but

because he was a thief, and ¹had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

7 Then said Jesus, let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

¹ ch. 13. 29.

§ 324. *The best of almsgiving.*

Here we learn that Lazarus was not merely raised from the dead, but was also restored to the full use of life and health. He was one of those who sat at the table with Jesus at this supper. They whom Christ had raised, as from death, they whom He has delivered by his grace from the bondage of sin, and made able to walk in newness of life, these should be sure to sit with Him at his supper, these should attend thankfully at that sacrament, which He has prepared for a remembrance of Himself, and for the comfort and support of his disciples. At this supper in Bethany we are told "Martha served;" whilst Mary took "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." Both sisters were in attendance on our Lord, both willing to spend and to be spent in his service. If we can no longer wait upon his person, let us be ready to serve those whom He has left us in his stead, to receive the attentions due unto Himself. Let us study how we may best help and benefit each other. Let us be glad of an opportunity to do each other some unexpected kindness, to spend in doing good such an amount of means, as we scarce could have been supposed to possess.

Nothing could more powerfully set forth the little importance which we ought to attach to wealth, than the fact here mentioned, that Judas "had the bag, and bare what was put therein." He was the treasurer to this holy company. He had the custody of the fund which belonged in common to Christ and his apostles. This office belonged to "Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him." And this our Lord allowed though He must have known Judas to be a thief; for He knew all things as they really were. And yet He could neither have wished to put temptation in the way of any man, nor have been indifferent to the waste of those means which no doubt were bestowed largely on the poor. Only He cared chiefly for the souls of men. And He seems herein to teach us how much more worthy of our attention is treasure in heaven, than wealth on earth. His stewards we are, whatever be the gifts committed to our charge. Let us be ambitious of being entrusted, not with a large estate, but with abundance of grace. Let us seek to derive our own satisfaction, and to make ourselves useful to our brethren, by means of piety and eminence in holiness, rather than by any such office as that, for which Judas was thought fit.

The objection which Judas made, and the answer of our Lord, furnish us with useful directions as to the objects of Christian almsgiving. Judas professed to plead for the poor. To which Jesus made answer, "The poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." All then which, if Christ were here, we should owe to his blessed person, all this we may now find means of spending to the honour of his name. The building and adorning of houses suited for his worship, the support of his ministers, the spreading abroad of his Gospel, and the educating of children in the Christian faith, all these are fit employments of some large portion of those means, which God has placed at our disposal. And when all these have had their fair share of our attention, we have besides these, the poor always with us. The want which is in the world through sin, will always supply us with ample exercise of our Christian bounty, in both relieving it at the present, and for the future helping to prevent it.

Whilst our Lord was thus instructing his disciples at the abode of Lazarus, the house was much resorted to by the Jews. And "the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." What a privilege was this, to be the object of persecution, for drawing many to the faith of Christ! What a privilege thus to draw them, thus to help in their conversion! How far above all other charity is this, to love the souls of our brethren! How far better than all other alms are these, to minister to their spiritual necessities, to help them to believe in Christ! Would that our resurrection from sin to holiness might in like manner turn many to the knowledge of the Lord! Would that we might be seen as Lazarus was, constant at the same table with Him that raised us! What argument would have such force for the conversion of the world as the manifestation of more piety in the Church? And how can there be an increase in the true piety of the Church, unless we each of us try to grow in it ourselves?

Christ rideth upon an ass into Jerusalem.

12 ¹ On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

14 And Jesus when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15 ² Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

17 The people therefore that was with him when

¹ Matt. 21. 8.

he called Lazarus out of the grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him.

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

² Zech. 9. 9.

§ 325. *That God loveth all men.*

The entry of Christ into Jerusalem after the manner of a triumphant king, may shew us how He should be in our apprehension a divine Sovereign, One whom we reverence, obey, and love. This was not at first so understood by his disciples; and at first it may be hard also to us. "But when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him;" namely, in the book of the prophet Zechariah, 9. 9. And the passage of prophecy, compared with what they knew of the event, would convince them that it was in reference to his spiritual kingdom, that these things were both written and done. And this should therefore be one great use we make of what we see or read of earthly state. Vain it is in itself. Yet it is useful as betokening that which is not vain but most important, the authority of lawful sovereigns, and of all who bear rule under them. But further it has been taken by prophets and apostles, or rather by the Holy Spirit of God speaking by their mouths, to describe to us the greatness and the glory of Christ. Thus kings have this additional title to our respect, that their state is a faint sign of that which Jesus holds over his faithful people. And earthly pageants are thus not without their use, if they remind us that there is no sight so grand, no sound so glorious, as can sufficiently enable us to conceive the majesty of our Lord which is in heaven: "Ride on," we may therefore say in the words of David to our Lord, "ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thy arrows are very sharp;" namely, those with which Christ vanquished the evil spirits, and also pierced to conviction the hearts of sinners, "and the people shall be subdued unto thee: even in the midst among the King's enemies." Psal. 45. 5, 6.

Most wonderfully is this prophecy fulfilled in the devotion which our Lord receives from his faithful people, in the midst of a world which is at enmity with Him. Most literally was it fulfilled by the homage which was offered Him by the multitude at Jerusalem, under the very eyes of the hostile rulers. "The people therefore that was with him, when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record." See how fearlessly they gave proof of their being convinced! See how little we should be hindered by either fear or shame in testifying what we have ourselves experienced of our Lord's great power and love! See how largely we might help, every one of us, by our zeal, to draw from his enemies the honourable testimony, "Behold, the world is gone after him!"

Amongst the number, who were stirred up on this occasion were "certain Greeks," that is to say, Gentiles. "The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." The caution of Philip, in first mentioning this circumstance to Andrew, shews how strange it seemed to them being Jews, that any Gentile should wish to see their Lord. This may serve to remind us how far off we were by nature from God's grace, how as Gentiles we seemed debarred by our lost condition from all interest in the covenant of God's mercy through Christ. But the promise was to Abraham and to his seed; and it was this, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. See Gen. 22. 18. This promise therefore rightly understood, should have prepared the Jews to receive with open arms as many of the Gentiles as would see Jesus. And this promise, thus interpreted, should convince us, that God's love from the beginning has comprehended all mankind, though for a time, and for a purpose profitable to all, He set a barrier between Jews and Gentiles. If that wall of partition be now thrown down, if the gate be now thrown open, if we are permitted, nay invited, by faith to behold our Lord, let us take pains that we may see Him to the everlasting comfort of our souls. Let us see Him, as He is, the Saviour of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, of all who believe in his name.

Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and right are thy judgments! Great is thy love for sinful men; yea for all men, of all nations under heaven! "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Rev. 15. 3.

Christ is troubled in soul.

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 ' He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake

to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34 The people answered him, ' We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

35 ' Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

¹ Matt. 10. 39.

² Ps. 110. 4.

§ 326. *The uses of trial.*

It was when certain Greeks had desired to see Him, that our Lord declared the hour to be now come that the Son of man should be glorified. And in this He seems to have referred to his approaching death. For He adds immediately afterwards, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And his meaning seems to be this, that by his death He should save the souls of many Gentiles as well as Jews. His death was needful to our salvation. Only by his blood could we be saved. Only by his dying for us are our sins washed out, or our souls justified in the sight of God. And this is his glory. This is the fruit He rejoices to bear in abundance, and for the sake of which He yielded up to death that most precious of all seeds, his body. From the same image of a seed, first dying before the plant appears, our Lord here takes occasion to remind his disciples that they too must die, must be willing to die, must disregard their present life, nay, must hate it in comparison of life eternal; this they must do if they would keep it, if they would keep it for that blessed immortality. So that our way to glory is in some sort like to that which our Lord has gone before. We must be indifferent to what here is most valued. We must be ready, if duty were to require it, to sacrifice even life itself. We must herein follow Christ closely, if we would be counted to serve Him faithfully. We must follow Him even unto death, if after death we would be with Him where He is; if either before or after death we would have the Father honour us.

See then here what our Lord for us graciously endured! Hear what in the apprehension of his sufferings He cried out! "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." If this too be our feeling in any trial which we are called upon to endure, let us remember that it is no more than what our Lord first has felt: even He who "was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4. 15. And let us note for our consolation the reflection following: "but for this cause came I unto this hour." Let us thus apply this consideration to ourselves. We live that we may bear fruit. We are tried, in order that the trial of our faith may work patience, and hope, and love. And for our encouragement to persevere, we have both our Lord's example of patience in tribulation, and the gracious voice which was heard from heaven, that God in Him would glorify his name. 'This voice came, as our Lord tells us, for our sakes. It was meant no doubt to convince all disciples to the end of time, that there is power from on high ever close at hand, to support us in our trials, and to convert our cross into a crown of victory.

By the lifting of Christ on the cross, all men that ever have believed have been drawn unto Him. By our sufferings, if we bear them patiently, we shall both help to draw others unto Christ, and ourselves be drawn more near unto his love. Let us walk whilst we have this light. Let us walk as children of the light. In nothing may we better prove our kindred to our Lord, than in thus walking, that is to say, living according to the light He gives us. "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." His sight is of no use to him. He has eyes, and yet he sees not. Without Gospel light, without faith in Christ, we have minds but cannot understand, we have hearts but we cannot rightly feel. We know not whither we go. We are advancing towards the pit of destruction; and are not aware that our life is in jeopardy. We do evil; and we know not that it is evil. We know not to do good; and we do it not. We injure our brethren; when we mean perhaps to do them a kindness. When perhaps we think to do God honour; we are doing despite unto his blessed Son.

Christ is not believed on by the Jews.

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, ¹ Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 ² He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

43 ³ For they loved the praise of men more than

the praise of God.

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

46 ⁴ I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

47 ⁵ And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: ⁶ the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

¹ Is. 53. 1. Rom. 10. 16.

² Matt. 13. 14.

³ ch. 5. 44.

⁴ ch. 3. 19.

⁵ ch. 3. 17.

⁶ Mark 16. 16.

§ 327. *The guilt of unbelief.*

That the Jews believed not, is here shewn to be a blindness which they brought upon themselves. They could not believe, and why? Because of what Esaias the prophet had said would happen. Now what he had spoken of, amounts to this, that this people for their own obstinacy, should be hindered from hearing with their ears, and seeing with their eyes. So that the more they themselves refused to believe, they were the less moved, the less helped to believe by God. For this which Isaiah had said, was spoken by him when he saw the glory of Christ, and spake of Him. The words refer to this very time, to the wilful rejection of Christ by the Jews, and to the judicial blindness they thus brought upon themselves. See Isai. 6. 9, 10. and 53. 1.

But this judgment was not such as to make their believing impossible. For St. John here adds: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him." They were convinced in their hearts that He was the Christ. And yet they durst not profess Him with their lips. They were afraid of being put out of the synagogue. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Thus we see the true cause of their unbelief. Thus we see that to believe is not enough, unless the belief be such as leads us to love God rather than men, and to seek his approbation rather than theirs. To believe is not enough, unless we also attain to the proper fruit of believing, that we should not abide in darkness. It was for this that Christ came as a light into the world; not that we should believe on Him without owning or proving our belief; but that we should shew forth our faith in our lives. And it was this which the Jews could not do, because they would not. And the account written by Esaias beforehand no more hindered them from believing, than does our now knowing that they then believed not.

Else how could we understand our Lord's words following, how could we understand the whole tenour of Scripture, which appeals to us as having ability to choose in some sort for ourselves, which condemns us if we choose amiss, and if we choose aright pronounces praise? Hearken, ye that trust to be excused in sin, by reason of inability to choose better, hearken to the Son of God declaring, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." It lies with us then to reject or not; though it is at the same time true that our faith is of God's giving. But He gives to our prayers. And yet He also first moves us to pray. Only He moves those, who when He moves obey. In the beginning of our conversion unto Himself, and in each step we take towards holiness of life, God helps chiefly, and yet we also must help greatly. He chooses for us; and yet we must choose also for ourselves. He judges at the last day righteous judgment. And whom does He judge if not us his creatures? And how could He judge us if we had done nothing, and had nothing that we could do, in choosing or rejecting the Gospel of his Son? "His commandment is life everlasting." But it is so only to them which obey it. "Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." This is the example set us by our blessed Lord. Even as He has spoken to us so let us do. This should be the practice of us his people.

Lord, reveal to us thine arm! Lord, help us to believe in the report of Thee! Blind not our eyes for our iniquity! Harden not our hearts for our sins! Make us to love the praise of God more than the praise of men! Make us to believe on Thee, and to believe on Him that sent Thee!

Christ washeth the feet of his disciples.

1 Now ¹ before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him ;

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God ;

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments ; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

¹ Matt. 26. 2.

§ 328. *The duty of being humble minded.*

These things are said to have happened "before the feast of the passover." See ver. 29. That is to say, it was before the eating of the paschal lamb. For before the day on which the lamb was eaten, the Jews used to feast together with certain appropriate ceremonies, as did our Lord and his disciples, on this occasion. And these preparatory meals were sometimes called eating the passover, see Matth. 26. 17. Mark 14. 14. This then happened on the very day before Christ died on the cross, at the last supper which He ate with his disciples, and as the supper drew towards the end. It was when He "knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father," then it was, that "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Men are apt when they are about to do any great service to each other, to expect somewhat of homage in proportion. But here we may learn, the nearer we are to doing any great good, so much the more to exercise humility. And this rule we should apply to those smaller services, which every hour enables us to render to each other, as members of one household. When therefore we can do a brother a good turn, let us watch that we never do it as if we were doing a great favour. Let us be careful that we assume not any credit or importance for the good which we have opportunity to confer. And lest we should be tempted thus vainly to presume, let us take the very same time, as a fit occasion for some act of signal humiliation, such as this washing the feet of the disciples.

Another circumstance of importance to be here noted, as illustrating the disposition of our Lord, is "the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." This guilty purpose must have been well known to Christ ; yet it neither checked the ardour of his love, nor stayed the act of his humility. Judas must have been one of those whose feet He washed. For it is not till afterwards that we read of his going out. Ver. 30. And from comparison of the other Gospels there is reason to suppose that he stayed long enough to receive the bread, though not the wine, in that ordinance of universal obligation, which at the very end of this supper our Lord administered. Judas probably received the bread of the Lord's supper. Judas certainly was amongst those whose feet were washed by the Lord's hands. Let not us then be discouraged in doing good, by any conviction we may have upon our minds, that amongst those whom we would assist are some evil and unthankful. Though they be even traitors unto Christ, and though even we know them so to be, we must be ready, if we would follow his example, both to do them good, and to do it in such a manner as helps to humble ourselves. And to this latter point we should take the more earnest heed, in proportion as we have reason to think ill of those whom we are called upon to help. Lest otherwise the alms which we administer, be converted by the enemy of our souls, into a snare of arrogance and pride ; and whilst they serve to assist our brethren, help only to condemn ourselves.

Thirdly, we should here observe, how at the very time when Jesus did this thing, He did it "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." His great glory is here set down in the same view with his humility, that the higher the one is proved to be, the other may be seen to be the more lowly. And what a reproof is here for any pride that man dare cherish ! What a pattern for any humiliation we may have occasion to undergo ! What so great height as this have we that we can leave ? What so lowly office have we opportunity to perform ? What so great height have we to glory in ? Yet which of us would not think it an act of condescension to wash the feet of any other ? Which of us would rise from the midst of supper, in order to do services the most menial to those, whose place it would rather be to do them unto us ? Let us learn hence how far we are both in practice and in spirit from the example of our blessed Lord. Let us at least be convinced of sin. Nay, more, let us be stirred up to repent and to amend. Let us be persuaded that there is no duty that we can discharge, no post that we can occupy, no lot that we can receive, which is beneath our dignity, or so low as our deserts.

Lord, grant that we may love them that are in the world, as Thou hast loved us ! Grant that we may do to them, as Thou hast done to us ! Grant that we may love them unto the end, doing for them the utmost in our power ! And do Thou also love us unto the end, in death, and in the day of judgment !

Christ cometh to wash Peter.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 ~~That he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Now ye what I have done to you?~~

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

¹ Matt. 10. 24. ch. 15. 20.

§ 329. *That we must be washed by the blood of Christ.*

"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" this was no more than might seem fitting for every one of the disciples in humility to have said; when Jesus undertook for them a work so menial. "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Shall those hands, at whose touch the blind are made to see, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead raised up, shall those blessed hands of thine do work so unfitting for thy majesty, to one so unworthy as thy servant? Thus far Peter answered in what seems to be humility. And Jesus graciously replied, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." These words should at once have satisfied his mind; should have made him at once submit. But here the ardour of his temper was exhibited, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Nor would he consent till he was told that this was absolutely necessary for his having part with Christ. It would have been better for him to have been washed at the first. It would have been better to conclude at once that what Christ did must be right. But when Christ had told him that it was right, it was then far more sinful to resist. When Christ has told us what to do, or to believe, let us not wait till we understand what we ourselves shall gain; let us believe or do without delay, in the full assurance, that though we know not now what He doeth, we shall know sufficiently hereafter.

The washing which our Lord here signified to be necessary for Peter, meant the cleansing of his soul from sin by the blood of Christ. And of this, the washing of the feet with water was a sign. And as a sign it was sufficient that the feet only should be washed; just as in our baptism, the sprinkling of a few drops signifies, as well as the dipping of the whole body, that cleansing from sin which takes place. Let us lay to heart therefore, in this sign, the thing signified; the necessity of our being washed by the blood of Christ. Not only must He have died for us; that He would have done for Peter, whether He had washed his feet or no. Not only must his blood have been shed for us; this also has been done for all. Besides all this, our souls must be washed in his blood; and this must be done by means of our faith; for the washing here spoken of is not of the flesh but of the spirit. It is the being washed clean from sin, the being accounted just before God. And it is by faith, by a lively, fruitful faith, that we are justified in the sight of God. Oh, may it in this sense be truly said of us, "Ye are clean!" Oh, may there be no room, amongst so few as one family, to add, "but not all!" Yet if this needed to be added even of the apostles, must we not fear lest it be added of us also? Must we not tremble to think it possible, nay probable, that some in our own household are not yet right with God, not duly cleansed by the blood of Christ?

But besides a sign of his cleansing us from sin by his blood, this action of our Lord was also a professed example for our guidance in humility. "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet:" this is the conclusion He draws for our practice. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you:" this is his own account of his object in this action. "The servant is not greater than his lord:" this is the proof that the rule applies to every one amongst ourselves. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them:" this is the promise annexed to every duty; and the warning here connected with every instruction this, that knowledge without practice is vain. What need we then herein any further information? Only let us do what thus we know. Only let us practise what here we learn, and behold the consequence, "Happy are ye!" Happy we are in the life which we have to live on earth; happy, because here the less we have of pride, we shall have the less occasion to be hurt or mortified; happy, because there is no pleasure on earth so great as the ministering to the necessities of others, and no way so pleasantly to do it, as to do it with humility and love. And happy we are sure to be in the life which is to come, if here we do what Christ has bidden us; for of that life He has certainly revealed, that whatsoever we here do for his sake, unto one of the least of these his brethren, He will then count it as done unto Himself. See Matt. 25. 40.

Christ giveth the sop to Judas.

18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, ¹ He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

19 || Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*.

20 ² Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

21 ³ When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he

should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

25 He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a [†]sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son of Simon*.

27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

29 For some of *them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

30 He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

¹ Psal. 41. 9.

|| Or, *From henceforth*.

² Matt. 10. 40.

³ Matt. 26. 21.

† Or, *morael*.

§ 330. *What it is to betray Christ.*

Our Lord, almost in the same breath, magnifies the office of his apostles, and tells them that one of them should betray Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." Such was the divine appointment of the apostles. It was the being sent by Christ. Such is the divine appointment of the Christian ministry. It is the being sent by those whom Christ has sent. And such is the duty of receiving those whom we may know to be thus sent by Christ. It is the receiving Him. It is the receiving Him that sent Him. The Father and the Son are both honoured by the attention which is paid to Christian ministers; by the respect which is paid to their teaching. But how grievous is the scandal that ensues on their sins! How greatly is our Lord troubled in spirit when He declares, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me!"

This was said to the twelve apostles. This might be said very probably, with truth, to any twelve of their successors whom man could now select. It is well if it may not be said also truly to each smallest family. It is well if it may not be said truly to ourselves. "One of you shall betray me." To fall from grace once attained, this is to betray our Lord. To be in any thing more sinful than we once have been, this is to betray our Lord. To be more dishonest, more covetous, more quarrelsome, more proud, more eager for pleasure, more fond of the world, this is to betray our Lord. It was in mercy that Christ thus warned Judas. It is in mercy that He would in these words warn us. Let us look not one on another, but each to our own selves; let us not doubt, but be assured, that for our sake, and for our improvement, if not also of us ourselves, these words were written.

Peter it seems was forward to learn of whom in particular our Lord spake on this occasion. And to this effect he made signs to John; who, according to the posture in which they then used to take their meals, lay with his head close unto our Lord. But when John asked Him, "Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." He does not tell plainly to John himself. And He seems to have answered in so low a tone of voice, that none of the rest could hear at all. For only thus can we explain what is said afterwards, that "no man at the table knew for what intent" Christ spake to Judas. Curiosity about the sins of others was what our Lord would by no means encourage. We ought to be anxious to examine into our own. We ought to be watching against ourselves, lest of the many mercies heaped on us by our Lord, there be any, which through our negligence and unthankfulness, turn only to our greater condemnation.

This last act of our Lord to Judas, the giving him the sop, was undoubtedly an act of kindness. It was calculated to turn, if possible, the heart, which was about to resolve on the worst of sin. But "after the sop Satan entered into Judas." Christ knew of this beforehand, ere Judas had yet thought of it. Christ knew of it, and yet treated him with his wonted kindness. Mercy however, when received without thanks, does but harden the sinner's heart. And it was immediately after this last favour conferred, that the traitor, given up to Satan, resolved on his deed of darkness. "That thou doest, do quickly." Thy day of grace is now over. No more of warning will be given to alarm, no more of love exerted to move thy stubborn will. Fill up the measure of thine iniquity. Do without delay, in act, the sin thou hast done already in thy soul. "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night." Darkness is no hinderance to deeds of evil. No time seems inconvenient for sin. But when we have good to do, how often are we found waiting for opportunity! If then Judas waited not for light to betray Christ, let us learn to reckon no night too dark, no season too inclement, no hour too inconvenient, to go out, and to do good, in the service of our Lord.

Christ commandeth us to love one another.

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: ¹ and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

34 ² A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will ³ lay down my life for thy sake.

38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

¹ ch. 7. 34.

² ch. 15. 17. Lev. 19. 18. 1 John 4. 21.

³ Matt. 26. 33.

§ 331. *How love in Christians might influence unbelievers.*

Whilst Judas was present, our Lord “was troubled in spirit.” Ver. 21. But “when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” So painful should the company of the wicked be to us also: so great our grief to think of their fearful condition; so agreeable our relief when they are gone out from amongst us, though it be to our own harm that they are gone! No plot they can form, no malice they can execute, will fail to minister to the glorifying of God, if only we be patient and resigned. It was his death that Christ here meant, when He said that God would straightway glorify the Son of man. And his death He signified by the expression, “Whither I go, ye cannot come.” And when Peter desired to know where that could be, He replied, “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.” Death is not an end which we may attain to when we will. A death endured, in persecution for Christ’s sake, however glorious a way of following our blessed Lord, is what few are privileged as was Peter to attain, even after long waiting for their end. To be ready to lay down our life is not enough. We must be content to have it lengthened out in weariness, and want, and woe; if so it shall seem good to God.

But though we may not thus follow Christ, just when we ourselves like, and though we can in few cases, or none, now encounter for his sake a violent death like his, yet we may be sure that, unless first He come to judgment, we shall follow Him at length by some means to the grave; we shall all reach at length that gate, which, if we reach it in obedience and faith, is our door to enter into eternal life. Let us then be prepared, that we may not shrink from it when near, with a servile and unworthy fear, nor yet presumptuously profess, as did Peter on this occasion, that we are ready at any moment to encounter it. At the very time when we perhaps would boldly ask, “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?” it may be true of us, as it here was of Peter, that we shall first thrice deny our Lord. When we consider how many sins we have to repent of, how many more we may yet have to confess with shame, how many graces we fall short in, how utterly unlike our life is to our profession, we may well pray to be delivered from sudden death; we may well implore when death approaches either suddenly or slow, “O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be no more seen.” Psal. 39. 15.

Ere, the time of his own departure, and at the very moment of announcing it, Jesus left as his solemn bequest to his disciples, what He called a new commandment; “that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” And by way of binding this more effectually on our consciences He added, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Would we then obey our Lord’s last new commandment, let us look to it that we love one another; that we do what good we can, out of Christian love; that whatever evil we abstain from doing to each other, we abstain out of Christian love. Let us see to it that we love after this sort, as Christ has loved us. Not in any vain profession, not for any ends of mere selfish pleasure, but for our own eternal interest, for God’s greater glory, and for the honour of our Lord and Saviour, let us love, and do what love requires; let us do as we would be done by; let us love as we would be beloved. Or further, would we be taken for true Christians? would we have men know that we are Christ’s disciples? would we have them know this with a view to their becoming so themselves? Again observe, the way thereto is that we love one another. When men in whose hearts there is no thought of Christ, see Christians who profess to serve Him yet failing in this duty of Christian love, what can they think, except that either our profession is hollow, or our faith, if we indeed hold it, fruitless? Do we seek revenge? Then how, they reasonably ask, how can we believe that this is of God’s writing, “Avenge not yourselves.” Rom. 12. 19. Do we grudge to give? Then how must they suppose that we interpret the saying of the Lord Jesus, that “it is more blessed to give than to receive?” Acts 20. 35. Are we distinguished in far distant lands chiefly for our eagerness after gain, or for our skilful inventions in the arts of war? Why then need we wonder that the heathen are still heathen? How can we expect that it will ever again be said as it once was of the primitive disciples, “See how these Christians love one another?”

Christ comforteth his disciples.

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my

Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

8 Philip said unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

§ 332. *Jesus the way of life.*

We now enter on a discourse of considerable length, addressed by our Lord to his disciples, at the conclusion of his last supper, after Judas had gone out, and when He was about to be immediately betrayed. These circumstances seem to require of us more than usual attention to the truths which are here revealed, to the duties which are here insisted on. For would not this be the case, would not these be our feelings, if we were expecting to lose any near relation, any friend whom we dearly love, and who has dearly loved us? Would not his last words be listened to with tenfold interest? Should we not be sure to cherish them in our memories with tenfold affection? Should we not reasonably expect that he would choose for our instruction at such a time, that which it is most important for us to know? In proportion as he loved us, should we not feel certain that he would desire now to tell us what is most for our good? And in proportion as we have loved him, should we not ever after delight to do whatsoever at such a moment he desired? Here then we have the last injunctions of the best of friends, of a Friend just about to die, just about to die for us. Let us attend. Let us endeavour to understand. Let us strive, and pray for help in our exertions. Let us strive both to understand and to believe; both to believe and to obey.

"Let not your heart be troubled." It was likely this would now be the case with the disciples, when they had been warned that some great harm would soon befall their Master. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." This is the best remedy for all trouble of the heart. To have the same trust in Jesus Christ which is due to the Creator and Preserver of the world. This it is that will give us courage in time of adversity, and in temptation an assurance of being safe. And of the many things which we have to believe concerning Christ, there is no one more fit to give us a cheerful hope than this, that He is gone to prepare a place for us. In that place He assures us, there are many mansions. That is to say, there is therein ample room. Heaven is not a straitened realm. Though the way be narrow, the place is large; if only we once can enter. There is room therein for many, there is room for many to abide for ever. And that room is not prepared in vain. Heaven is no narrow kingdom; and it is the pleasure of the King there reigning, that his house shall be full. See Luke 14. 23. There is room therein for all. Who then need despair? Though Judas betrayed his Master, there is room in heaven for the rest of the disciples. Though Peter thrice deny his Lord, there is room in heaven for him. And Christ is gone before, to prepare for us this place. That He was about to leave, might else have grieved the disciples. That He is no longer on earth, might else fill us with concern. But now this is one chief thing, which should remind us for our joy, that a place is being prepared for us in heaven.

And the way to go thither is also here set forth for our direction. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This is our Lord's answer to Thomas, inquiring of Him the way. And when Philip further asked, "Lord, shew us the Father;" He assured them that whosoever had seen Him had seen the Father also. Do we then desire to see God? Do we desire when we wake up from death to behold his presence in glory? Let us examine ourselves now, have we sought Him by this only way? When we draw near in faith, is it in Christ that we believe? When we draw near in prayer, is it through Christ that we pray, is it through his merits and mediation that we really trust that we shall be heard? When we draw near in love, is it Christ that we try to love, is it his love in dying for us, that we set before our minds, as the rule and pattern of our own? It is well to think of the Father having made us, it is well to think of his having given for us his Son. It is well to thank Him continually for all his goodness, and for all his gifts. But all this is of no avail to us, unless we think also of his Son. Our very thanks unto the Father we must offer through the Son. For so has the Father told us by the Son, that He, even Jesus, is the way, and that "no man cometh unto the Father" but by Him.

Christ promiseth the Comforter.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

13 'And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:

but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 I will not leave you || comfortless: I will come to you.

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

¹ Matt. 7. 7.

|| Or, *orphans*.

§ 333. *The love of Christ made manifest.*

What a marvellous assurance is this given by Christ to his disciples, that if they would believe on Him they should do works greater than He did Himself. To them, employed as they were afterwards in spreading abroad his Gospel through the world, this might mean that they should be enabled by our Lord to work more strange miracles, and to make more numerous converts. To ourselves, if we may in any sense apply, with all humility, this assurance for our spiritual comfort, we might conceive it to signify, that the degrees of holiness to which through grace we may attain, are more marvellous in beings so frail as we are, than were in Christ all the wonders which He wrought. And the reason here added thus applies also to us. It is because Christ has gone unto the Father. It is because He there hears our prayers, and presents them to the Father to be heard; it is because He does for us whatsoever we ask in his name; it is because He has thence sent us the gift of the Holy Ghost; therefore it is that we are able to deny the flesh, to resist the devil, and to renounce the world: things else in us incredible, nay, impossible.

Through Christ, now in heaven, our prayers are heard. By prayer we obtain the gifts of grace. By means of grace we attain unto loving God. By means of grace we come to keep his commandments. He has not left us comfortless. He has given us according to his promise "the Spirit of truth," to dwell with us, and to be in us, for ever. Through the Spirit, and only through the Spirit, we are able to keep his commandments. And this also we do through love, and through love only. He is the Spirit of love, as well as the Spirit of truth. It is his office, above all other things, to fill our hearts with love. And here we have two chief points in love set forth. It comes of a conviction that we are closely related to Christ, and through Him to the Father. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Naturally we feel affection for our near relations. We love them, being brother or sister, parent or child, whether they are such as we are else disposed to love or no. We love them, because we know they are our kindred. Is it nothing then to know that we are of one family with Christ, nay, members of the same body with Himself? Can we help loving Him, if we are convinced that we are in Him, and He in us, even as He also is in his Father? And if we love Him, can we help keeping his commandments? Not if we love Him truly. For thus it is that He has said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Are we doing his will? If not, we cannot be loving Him. If we do it, we must be influenced by love; for by no other means can we do his will. Without it we may be just and true. But this alone is not the will of Christ. It is that we be just and true for love of Him. Without love we may be beautiful and tender hearted. But this is not to keep his commandments, unless we give and forgive, for this very reason, in this very manner, and in love like to this, that God has for Christ's sake forgiven us.

And now let us see how great is our advantage, if thus we love our Saviour. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." God loves indeed all mankind. And when all were sinners, Christ died for all. But here He speaks of some other kind of love, or at least of love otherwise made manifest. For many whom God thus loves know not of it. Many for whom Christ died are not aware of it; and therefore they now enjoy less profit from his love, and for the future have less prospect of advantage. But to them that love Christ, his promise is express, that they shall not only be beloved, but shall know that they are beloved. He will manifest Himself to us. This is the consummation of our joy; to be convinced that our affection is returned, to have assurance that He who is all powerful and all good, does really love us his unworthy servants. This is made known to us in part on earth; in heaven it will be fully made manifest. Here all things work together for our good. In heaven we shall see clearly how they do so; and seeing, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Christ leaveth peace to his disciples.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remem-

brance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

§ 334. *The fruit of Christian love.*

The question of Judas, not of Iscariot, but of Jude, the writer of the Epistle, has obtained for us further information, as to how it is that Christ makes Himself manifest to his disciples, though not unto the world. It is because they love Him, and keep his sayings. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And this cannot be the case with us without our being aware of it. The Father and the Son cannot dwell by the Spirit in the inner man, without its being manifest to us that they are in us. And when this is manifest, then we have the sense of being beloved, then we have the fulfilment of this promise of our Lord. And this happens when we first love Christ. And here we are reminded what is the sign of loving Him; to keep his sayings. Only let us remember that the sign is not the same with the things signified. We may do some things which our Lord bids us, without loving Him, out of fear, or even out of worldly interest. To keep his commandments, is not loving Him, though it is the best of proof that we do so. We must keep them, out of an affectionate desire to please Him who first loved us. We must feel the warmth of love, as well as do the works of love; or we may obey without having his love manifest to our souls.

How much more sure, how much more valuable is that service which springs from love, than that which comes of interest or fear! This we see daily in our own affairs on earth; wherein nothing is so well done, or so sure to be done at all, as what is done out of affectionate regard. How different too is the effect on our own hearts, according as we act from any other motive, or from love! In the one case we are full of trouble or of terror; in the other, we have that peace, which our Lord has here described as his bequest to his disciples. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And this assurance is closely connected with the promise, in the verse before, of the Comforter, that He should teach us, and bring all things to our remembrance, whatsoever our Lord hath said.

However properly these assurances of help and comfort might belong first to the apostles, to whom they were addressed, and might signify the guidance and comfort they received in revealing the Gospel to the world; we cannot doubt that they belong also unto us, if only like them we love our Lord. Thus then we would apply what here is said. Fear need have no place in a Christian heart, in a soul which is animated by Christian love. There need be no alarm for the future, no painful apprehension by reason of the past. The sins of yesterday are blotted out. Today we have grace not to sin. For tomorrow, we know not whether it will come; or if it come, we trust that it will come for good. For worldly troubles, we live out of their reach; our treasure is in heaven. For spiritual cares, what cares can we conceive, if we reckon that in all things Christ cares for us; if we love and believe ourselves to be beloved of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord? How different is this manner of living, from that which "the prince of this world" imposes on his subjects! How different is this peace, which comes of loving Christ, from that fatal security in sin, which often comes of doing Satan's work: from that fearful looking for of judgment, which is the consequence of being Satan's servant! How different in life is our condition! How much more different in death! then it is that our peace will be most signal. Then will those, who truly love us, have occasion to rejoice, in proportion as they are persuaded that we depart in Christ; that with Christ we go unto the Father. If the Father be in any sense greater than the Son, us not having, like the Son, humbled Himself unto death, how much greater is the Father than we his creatures! How much greater than all that we can desire, must be the glory of dwelling in his presence! How much sweeter than all that we can conceive, must be the bliss of being made perfect in his love!

Christ the true vine.

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

¹ Matt. 15. 13.

² chap. 13. 10.

|| Or, severed from me.

§ 335. *That by our good works God is glorified.*

In this chapter and the next, we have that affecting discourse continued which our Lord addressed to his disciples, and which it is our privilege, as well as duty, to apply to ourselves. He is to us "the true vine." We are branches in Him, growing through his mercy from Himself, or as we are elsewhere spoken of, grafted in Him. See Rom. 11. 17. That is to say, as the vine supplies nourishment to the branches, so does Christ supply strength to our souls. And as the branches derive their very life from the vine, so do we derive from Christ our new life in the Spirit, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." Now it is the business of the husbandman, in the countries where vines are commonly cultivated, to prune the plants, that they may be more productive. Thus it is, according to our Lord's description, with the heavenly Husbandman. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Are we then, or are we not, bearing fruit? If none : we see here our sentence. We must expect to be taken away ; severed from Christ ; cut off from his blessed fellowship for ever. Or is it that we bear fruit, and yet notwithstanding are afflicted? We see here the reason ; we are chastened in order that we may bring forth more fruit. We see too by what means alone the heavenly husbandman will count us clean, even through the word that Christ hath spoken, and that is by the death He died. For his death was the thing of which He lately had discoursed. And it was as his last address, previous to his death, that this whole exhortation was delivered. We see further that our only way to bear fruit at all, is to abide in Him. And this we must do by means of faith ; "Without me ye can do nothing." This is a truth we need daily to remember. For there is none which we are more frequently tempted to forget. Without Christ we can do nothing. Nay, if we were to do much, without Him, it would be nothing. For the works, which when done through grace, and in the faith of Him, are good, the same, if done without Him, partake rather of the nature of sin. With Him we can do much ; we can do every thing ; every thing that is needful to prove our love of Him, every thing that is required to glorify God.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples." What? can God be glorified by the works of man? He can, if we work by faith in Christ. He can, if we work in the love of God, and in devotion to his Son our Lord. God is glorified. Angels rejoice. Saints give thanks. God is glorified, if we bear much fruit ; if we through faith are justified ; if being justified, we have grace to love ; if, out of love, we obey with all our might, and bear all the fruit we can. God is glorified, and we are Christ's disciples. We are his disciples indeed ; not by name only, but in reality. Not only in our own profession, but in his esteem. We are his disciples, if we bear much fruit. We shew, as branches, that we grow out of the true vine, that we partake of nourishment from the only root of life and health and fruitfulness. Let us then never be content with bearing little fruit. Let us not be satisfied unless we daily bear more and more. Let us study to improve in every good word and work. Let us purpose ; let us endeavour ; let us pray. For prayer is the means by which we may hope to have conveyed to us the grace we need. Prayer is the method by which all life is communicated from the vine to the branches. And it is especially thus promised us of our prayers : "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

May we be ever eager to ask, what God is always ready to hear ! May that which is his glory, be also our chief delight ! May it be our pleasure to bear much fruit ! May we always seek occasion to do more and more service unto God ! counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, in the trust that we shall have grace to triumph against sin, the world, and the devil ! See James 1. 2.

Christ calleth his disciples friends.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I com-

mand you.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and 'ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

¹ ch. 13. 34. 1 Thess. 4. 9. 1 John 3. 11.

² Matt. 28. 19.

§ 336. *That we should love as friends.*

Here we see how Christ has loved us; even as the Father loved Him. Here we see how He would have us love each other; even as He has loved us. And here we have it repeated, that this is his commandment, as if it were above all others his, that we should thus love one another; and that thus we shall abide in the love of Him if we keep his commandments. All this had been already stated nearly in the same terms; and yet it seemed good to Christ so soon to repeat it, within the compass of this last discourse. Must it not then be good for us again to fix our thoughts on this important subject; again to apply to our consciences the commandment of love, and the pattern of the love of Christ? For have we not already in this short interval forgotten, or neglected to put in practice, some of the holy purposes we so lately formed? Have we not in some one, or many instances, since we heard so lately that "new commandment," ch. 13. 34, been guilty of unkindness to each other, either in thought, or word, or deed?

Let us note, therefore, how our Lord here sets forth, with yet one other argument, this the last and most urgent of his commands. He appeals to us by the name of friends. He shews how He would treat us as friends in laying down his life for us. And He calls on us as friends of his to do this thing that He requires of us. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." These words do, indeed, especially belong to the apostles, for unto them was the will of God more particularly revealed, as to friends, by Christ. But through them it has been revealed also to us; and to us also, as being disciples of Christ, do these words belong. Us has He called friends, not servants. To us has He made known whatsoever it was determined in the counsels of God that man should know. For unto this it is that we have been chosen of God in Christ, that we should know his will; and that knowing it, we should do it. To this it is that Christ has ordained us, that we should go and bring forth fruit. We have not chosen Him. Lost in sin as we were by nature, we should have preferred always darkness rather than light. We should neither have desired to do right, nor have come to Christ for help unto salvation. But He has chosen us. He has favoured us Christians above all mankind, in giving us the knowledge of his Gospel; and some of us He has favoured above the rest, with means and opportunities both of faith and practice. The more we are thus favoured, the more fruit we must continue to produce; for to these ends He has so favoured us, that we should bring forth fruit, and that our fruit should remain. Which is the same that is elsewhere said of them that die in the Lord, that "their works do follow them." Rev. 14. 13. Thus it is that our fruit will remain; it will continue to increase as long as life shall last: and in the life to come it will be treasured up for our advantage.

And what our fruit is to be is here again in the end repeated, as well as that prayer must be our great help towards the growth of it. Do we then, let us examine ourselves over and over again, do we ask the Father in the name of Christ? Do we ask so as to obtain his grace? Are we renewed in heart so as to love one another? Do we discharge all our duties to each other out of love? out of the regard which we feel to our brethren, as children of the same Father, friends of the same Christ? If we were thus to feel, how much less irksome would be the most difficult of our labour! how much less powerful the temptations to offence! Would a brother wilfully wrong a brother? Would he grudge to wait on one whom he loves as a friend? Would he purloin from his own kindred? Would he oppress, revile, or slander those whom he regards as his own flesh and blood? Only then let us have love glowing in our hearts, only let us obey this commandment of Christ; and behold, all things that we have to do, even for strangers, much more for friends, will be easy to us, and pleasant, and profitable, even as things done for our own dearest brethren.

Christ is hated without a cause.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, ¹The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no \parallel cloke for

their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, ²They hated me without a cause.

26 ³But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

¹ ch. 13. 16. Matt. 10. 24.

\parallel Or, excuse.

² Ps. 35. 19.

³ ch. 14. 26. Luke 24. 49.

§ 337. *Consolations under enmity.*

It seems scarcely to be believed that One so gracious and good as our blessed Lord should have been hated by those amongst whom He lived. But hear what He said Himself: "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." The works of Christ gave proof to the beholders of who He was, and who was his Father. So that in hating Him they must have known, or might have known, whom they hated; they knew sufficiently to know that they were sinning, to be conscious that they were sinning against God. And how could it be that any one hated Christ? The reason is, that they who love sin are at enmity with every thing, and with every one, that is good. Especially are they at enmity with those whose words or actions are a reproof unto themselves. Thus the miracles and preaching of Jesus convicted the unbelieving Jews of sin. Thus the zeal and piety which it is our duty to make manifest, will be sure, if we are zealous and pious as we ought to be, sure to bring on us the hatred of the world. For though all with whom we dwell are now Christians in profession, and all, or nearly all, are baptized into the faith and service of Christ, yet are there many of these Christians who love to sin, many who are at enmity with God, many who are, therefore, still "of the world," many who still hate them that are of Christ.

We, therefore, if we are like minded with our Saviour, if it be the purpose of our will to fulfil his pleasure, if it be the study of our hearts to be what we profess, and to save our souls alive, we must not wonder, any more than the apostles, if the world hate us. We must call to mind, if we are thus hated, that the world hated first our Saviour Christ. We must console ourselves with thinking, that this very hatred, if we are not worldly minded, is a proof that we are not of the world, but have been chosen in Christ out of the world. And why should we be disheartened at persecution, when we consider what Christ Himself endured? when we remember that "the servant is not greater than his Lord?" Why should we despair at the indifference of the world to all that we can say or do for good, when we call to mind how little they have kept his words? All these things they do unto us for his name's sake, if only we be really believing in his name, and truly walking in the ways of his commandments. All these things they do in ignorance of God; which ignorance, though wilful, and therefore no cloak for their sin, is yet a strong motive for us to forgive their hatred, and to be contented under it. All these things are but a fulfilment of what is written in the Scripture. We should neither be surprised nor dejected at having that happen to us, which we are assured of beforehand, which we know that God knows of long before, and which we may be sure He permits for greater good. For so also it was said of our Lord Himself; "They that are mine enemies, and would destroy me guiltless, are mighty." Ps. 69. 4.

Only let us take heed that we give no cause for the hatred of the world. Let us be watchful that we never provoke persecution, that we take no pride in being persecuted, that we seek rather to be beloved than hated, that we give no one needlessly any manner of offence. Let the servant herein follow the example of his Master, who took pains not to provoke but to conciliate his enemies; not to encounter, but to avoid their malice. For what can be more opposite to a Christian spirit than to provoke our brother to do wrong, with a view to our own supposed profit by his ill doing? We ought rather to be concerned that he should sin, than glad that we ourselves are sinned against. We ought to be content to suffer when we must, but anxious to escape when conscientiously we may. We ought to administer unwelcome but wholesome counsel, in such a spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love, as shall win the souls of others, besides delivering our own. We ought to make our light shine before men, not with that vain glory, at which they close their eyes, but with that pleasant and profitable radiance, which will at once shew them our good works, and lead them to glorify our Father which is in heaven. See Matt. 5. 16.

Christ promiseth to send the Comforter.

1 These things have I spoken^a unto you, that ye should not be offended.

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will \parallel reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of Judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

^a Or, convince.

§ 338. *The offices of the Holy Ghost.*

Our Lord here tells his disciples both what they would have to suffer, and his reasons for warning them beforehand. These were, first, that they should not be offended; secondly, that when the time should come, they might remember that He had warned them. It is profitable then for us also to know, that what here we suffer is no more than what our Lord has foretold. It may prevent our being made to stumble, if we are aware of what offences are in our path. It may help us in bearing the cross of Christ, if we are aware that He warned us we must bear it. To be disciples of Christ in the very heart is not the sure road to worldly wealth, or ease, or peace. It will indeed give within a heavenly composure; but without, it often exposes us to tribulation and anxiety, to hatred and scorn and persecution. Do we wonder that our Saviour, Lord as He is of heaven and earth, has secured no better lot for his disciples? It may be strange, but it is no more than He has forewarned us. He was Himself aware that such would be the case. He has told us, in order that we might be aware of it. He held out no delusive hopes of unmingled happiness on earth. And the very certainty which we hence have of his knowing all the future, should convince us that He does in all things what is best.

The suffering here spoken of by Christ was to be fulfilled on the disciples as soon as He should go away from them. And at these tidings their hearts were so filled with sorrow that they could not so much as ask Him, "Whither goest thou?" Yet it was expedient, it was profitable, that He thus should go away. For on his departure He engaged to send both to them and to us the Holy Ghost, here called the Comforter. And so excellent a gift is here intended, that our Lord tells us, that for the sake of the coming of the Comforter, it was good for us that He Himself should go. Could any thing more clearly shew that the Holy Ghost and the Son are distinct persons, than that one would not come till the other had departed? Could any thing more clearly prove that the Son and the Holy Ghost are equal, than that it is good for us that one should go, in order that we may have the gift of the other? Be with us then, blessed Comforter, in all our troubles and adversities; be with us, thou Holy Spirit, in all our trials and temptations! Be to us all that Christ was when on earth, all that we can need now that He is gone up to heaven!

And let us next see what the Comforter was to do, what it is that He has done, for the world and for the church. "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." This must be a great blessing both for the world and for the disciples of Christ. For if the world be convinced of sin, by reason of its unbelief, if it be convinced that unbelief is sin, nay if it be only convicted though not convinced, the Comforter makes it manifest at the same time, that for as many as believe there is justification, and that they are justified before God by faith through Christ. And thus does the Comforter reprove the world of righteousness: proving, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear; proving, by the ascension of Jesus Christ, by his going to the Father, that He whom they slew was the Holy One and the Just, a man too good for earth, a God, the Lord of heaven. And of judgment also does the Comforter put the world in mind, in reproof of all love of earthly things; "because the prince of this world is judged," because Satan is fallen like lightning from heaven; see Luke 10. 18; because the many cases in which good now prevails against evil, prove that in the last day it will be triumphant. These things did the Comforter when first He came to the apostles. These things He has ever since continued to do. These things He has done by the inspired volume, written by holy men of old, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1. 21. These things He has done by the growth of Christianity in the world, and by the growth of piety in the church. These things may He do by his influence in our hearts; by turning our thoughts from sin to righteousness, from the praise of men to the judgment seat of Christ!

Christ has yet many things to say to the disciples.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, a little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

§ 339. *Of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.*

There are several proofs that the apostles were men deeply prejudiced with the mistakes prevailing amongst the Jews. And this was the reason that they could not at this time bear the many things which Jesus had yet to say to them. Such for instance were the abolishing of the ceremonial law, the calling of the Gentiles, the atonement to be made by his death, and justification through faith in his blood. On these things, and others like to these, Christ could not with so much profit discourse to them at any length, till they had been prepared by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And this doubtless is the reason that these things are only hinted at in the Gospels, but argued and explained at great length in the Epistles. They are things which Jesus had to say to the apostles, which they could not bear, were not fitted to hear, before his death, and which afterwards the Holy Ghost revealed to them, and by them to the Christian church.

For this was done by the Holy Spirit of God, here called "the Spirit of truth." He it was who guided the first preachers of the Gospel, and the writers of the Christian oracles, "into all truth." He it was who spake not of Himself, but received of the things that are Christ's, which mean the same as the "things that the Father hath." What a mystery is this which is here revealed! What distinctness of person, what unity of purpose, is here ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! What a pattern is here for Christian teachers, nay to all who give Christian counsel, that they should not speak of themselves, but whatsoever they hear, knowing it to come from God; whatsoever they receive, knowing it to be Christ's, that should they speak! And they should shew also to all men things to come. They should point from the present to the future; and inculcate the great lesson of heavenly forecast, the sacrificing of what we now wish to do, for the sake of what we hope for in eternity. These are instances of Christian conversation which well befit all those who trust within themselves that they have the Holy Spirit of God. These are duties which no one but that Spirit can incline us to undertake, or enable us effectually to discharge.

Our Lord having thus set forth to the disciples this one other office of the Comforter, to tell them things in which He Himself had not instructed them, now turns their attention once more, ere He concludes, to his death, and resurrection, and ascension. "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." For a time He was removed from their sight by death. But after his resurrection He was seen by them again, that they might be the better certified of his ascending into heaven. And at his departure He tells them they would weep and lament. His death, as we know, filled them with dismay. And even at his ascension it is probable that they were greatly perplexed, expecting, as they did, that He would at that time have restored the kingdom to Israel. See Acts 1. 6. But how soon was their sorrow turned into joy! How soon was the Comforter sent to give them peace and joy in believing! And how great cause had the world also to rejoice, the world for which Christ died, the world for which He ascended to plead before the Father the merits of his death for ever! Let this joy be ours. Let us rejoice to think that for us He died, for us He rose again from the dead, and in order to prepare a place for us He ascended into Heaven. See ch. 14. 2. Let us be convinced, and rejoice in our convictions. And if at times, under the recollection of our past sins, and under the sense of our remaining infirmities, we are inclined to weep and lament, if we feel as if Christ were absent from us, as if no one cared for our soul, let us call to mind these his gracious words, "I will see you again;" let us trust that again our heart shall rejoice; let us be persuaded that the joy which God will give us is such as no man taketh from us.

May God make us both to mourn for sin and rejoice in our deliverance! And if now for a time we see not Christ, may God grant that when He visits us again, we may behold his countenance for ever.

Christ speaketh no more in proverbs.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. ¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

25 These things have I spoken unto you in || proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in † proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come

into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no ‡ proverb.

30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32 ² Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to § his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

¹ Matt. 7. 7.

|| Or, parables.

† Or, parables.

‡ Or, parable.

² Matt. 26. 31.

§ Or, his own home.

§ 340. *Cheerfulness in tribulation.*

How reluctant is the heart of man to pray! Why else should our Lord so often inculcate the duty of praying? Why else should He repeat thrice, in this his last discourse, almost the very same exhortation? See ch. 14. 13. and 15. 16. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Can any thing in itself be more easy than to ask? Why then is it so hard to pray? Why, if it be not that to pray we must desire, and in order to desire such things as we ought, our hearts must be changed from sin to holiness? But this change itself comes by prayer. And we must begin to pray with the first grace that we receive. The first use we must make of the least grace we have, is to pray that we may have more. These prayers then let us offer in the name of Christ, in the assurance that through Him we shall receive, and that through his gift our joy shall be full.

At the same time when Christ promised so expressly that what we ask in prayer shall be granted, He told the disciples that the time was coming when they should ask Him nothing; that is to say, make no enquiries. Hitherto He had spoken many things to them in proverbs; but He was now about to teach them plainly, both by the events which would actually take place, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost enlightening their minds. And for these privileges, He told them, that there would be less need for Him to pray the Father in their behalf. "For," saith He, "the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." This was a most gracious testimony to the sincerity of that affection, which the disciples felt in their hearts for Christ. And upon hearing it they expressed their conviction that Christ knew all things, because He knew, as he shewed now, and as He had shewn on other occasions, the secrets of their souls. By this they believed that He came forth from God. By this we believe more, even that He was God Himself. Never may we, like them, for a time fall away from our convictions! Never may we be scattered or divided from each other! Never may we be severed from our devotion to our Lord, in the hour when his service would lead us to affliction.

Like the disciples we must expect tribulation in the world. And often as this warning is repeated, we may be sure that it is not more often than Christ knew to be needful. For notwithstanding the frequent repetition of it, how unwelcome is this notion of suffering to our thoughts! We are too apt to view religious conduct merely as a source of worldly comfort, or of worldly credit. And it is good for us to be frequently reminded that the end of our faith is not our present ease, but the salvation of our souls. See 1 Pet. 1. 9. Many things must here be otherwise than we could wish. The perverse contradict, the dishonest wrong, the cruel persecute, and the false deceive. But nevertheless we must be of good cheer. And why? Because our Lord has assured us of Himself, "I have overcome the world." Let us try to think of this his saying, in the very next affliction which overtakes us. Let us consider what his having overcome the world amounts to. It proves that we need not mind the world's frowns; for who would fear an enemy that has been thoroughly defeated. It proves that greater is He that is with us, than they that are against us: for how else could He have gained the victory? It should convince us, whatever troubles we meet with, either from this world, or from the prince of it, that they are under the guidance and controul of Him who has vanquished sin and death, and who will suffer no evil to befall us, beyond what He knows to be for our good. Let us then in any case be of good cheer. If God be with us, who can be against us? If Christ be on our side, who can hinder our gaining the victory? Did He not conquer, though left alone? And yet He was not alone, but with Him was the Father. And shall not we, who have the Son also with us, shall not we prevail against sin and Satan? Shall not we rejoice in our success? "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory," over sickness and pain of body, over anguish and care of mind, over want and weakness, over sin and death! "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" 1 Cor. 15. 57.

Christ prayeth to the Father.

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 ¹ As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, ² and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

¹ Matt. 28, 18.

² Ch. 16, 27.

§ 341. *The necessity of true faith.*

At the end of his discourse to the disciples Christ addressed a solemn prayer to the Father, that, now the hour was come, He would glorify the Son, that the Son might also glorify Him. And this glorifying means the honour which would redound both to the Father and the Son from the death of Christ, and from the salvation of those who should believe in Him. Salvation is the being saved from sin, and from death eternal. It is the being brought unto the inheritance of everlasting life. And for this Christ prayed. He being man as well as God, the Son of man as well as the Son of God prayed to the Father; as it is written of Him in the Psalms; "Desire of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." Psal. 2. 8. Thus did Christ ask of his Father both for us and for Himself; for Himself that He might be enabled, now the hour was come, to glorify the Father as He designed; for us, that we might have grace thus to know and to believe, and thus to help also in promoting the divine glory.

For observe here that it is not enough to know God as the Creator and Governor of the world; we must know both the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Neither is it enough to be sincere in any faith which we happen to profess; we must take pains that our knowledge be correct, that our faith be right faith. For "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Our happiness, our eternal salvation, depends more than is commonly supposed, not only on our sincerity, but on the truth of what we hold. It is necessary, speaking generally of those who might know aright, it is necessary unto our everlasting salvation, that we should know of Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of the true God, and that as God He is the sacrifice for the sin of man. We must know that by his death as the Son of man, He has reconciled unto us the Father, and was therein glorified by the Father, and the Father by Him. We must know that all things which had been revealed unto us by Christ, are revealed from the Father, are the will of the true God, of that eternal Spirit in whom we live, and move, and have our being. See Acts 17. 28. We must receive the words of Christ as the words of God, we must believe that Christ was sent from God. We must be persuaded that it was the intent of our Saviour's coming to save in the lost and condemned world, as many as by any means repent and believe, as many as receive what He reveals, as many as are thus given Him by the Father. All this we must know, and knowing must believe. All this as far as it is the purport of God's word, and all else that in that word we can be sure of; all we must believe, all we must hold for the most certain of all truths that man can know, if we would not perish everlastingly.

But besides the revelation of most important doctrine, we have here a pattern of most affecting prayer; not in meekness only, and lowliness of heart, but in every point of Christian perfection, our Lord might most forcibly have said, "Learn of me." Matt. 11. 29. And as He had so lately pressed on his disciples the duty of praying, He straightway followed it by the exercise of prayer. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven." Here we have a sign of holy confidence, worthy of the well beloved Son; an attitude of prayer well suited to express the faith and hope and joy of all adopted sons of God. The eyes indicate the direction of the thoughts. And as of the publican praying in the temple, it is recorded as a token of humility, that he "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," Luke 18. 13; so here that Christ lifted up his eyes to heaven, we take for a sign of faithfulness and love. And note how little of his prayer was for Himself; how much for his disciples, for his people, and for us! Let us learn the duty of praying largely for each other! Let the ministers of the Gospel learn to pray for the flock. Let the flock learn to intercede in prayer for those that are over them in the Lord.

Father, soon may that hour come when we shall have finished the work which Thou hast given us to do! Prosper the labours of thy ministers, prosper the prayers of thy faithful people! Manifest thy name unto them that shall be thine! Glorify thy Son in us; and make us in Him to glorify Thee!

Christ prayeth in behalf of his apostles.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath

hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be || sanctified through the truth.

† Psalm 104. 8.

|| Or, truly sanctified.

§ 342. *That we must be sanctified in the world.*

It is evident that this portion of our Lord's prayer, as well as a part of what goes before and follows it, refers especially to his chosen apostles. These are they who properly speaking were the men given unto Christ, out of the world, by the Father. See ver. 6. These are they through whose word others would afterwards believe. See ver. 20. These are they whom Christ, whilst He abode on earth, kept in the Father's name, and of whom no one was lost except "the son of perdition." But what a happy company was this! What a singular felicity to be thus chosen as apostles of Jesus Christ, eye witnesses of his works, hearers as well as preachers of his blessed words, and so large partakers of his grace that no one of them was lost but Judas! Oh, that to us also our Lord may grant that we may profit by our excellent opportunities! Oh, that for us also our Lord may intercede, that now whilst we are in the world, and He is here no more, the Father through faith in his name may keep us to be Christ's.

For thus it is He prays for his apostles, first that the Father would keep them in his name, that is to say, give them grace to continue in right faith, to persevere in holy practice; secondly, that they might be one, even as the Father and Son are one. And to this prayer He gives open utterance, on purpose that they might hear it, and hearing might rejoice. For what could be more matter of rejoicing to the apostles, than to hear their Lord thus pray in their behalf? And ought not this to fill us also with joy, if we believe that the Son thus intercedes for us, and that the Father has thus given us also to the Son. Let us believe that we are his, and we shall rejoice to think so. Let us believe that for us these prayers were offered up by Christ, and we shall endeavour, as He desires us, to be all of one mind. And this can only come to pass by our being all of a right mind. For whilst the ways of error are numberless, truth and truth alone is one. It is through the truth that we must be sanctified. It is through the truth that we must be united. For what one point in our being holy is more important, than for us to be of one heart in Christian faith? And how can we be thoroughly of one heart, as long as we are far from being of one mind? Let us remember that either of the two graces will help us to the attainment of the other. Let us out of love seek to make our own faith right, and to make others of the same faith with ourselves. And whilst we labour after unity in the truth, let us labour also to be one in love.

What can be more close than the union here set forth as the pattern for our agreement, "that they may be one, as we are?" What can be more affecting to such of us as strive to walk by faith in Christ, than the thought that we are all in common not of the world, all in common subject to the world's hatred? This surely should incline us the more entirely to exercise love towards each other. Our Lord prays not for his disciples that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil that is in the world. And ought not this to keep us from all wrangling and strife with each other, as to the things which we should believe in common? But further, this prayer of his may be a guide to us, in our intercourse with those who are to us something like what the heathen world was to the early converts. We cannot help having many near us who care little for the Gospel of our Saviour Christ, who are indifferent to the saving of their souls through his most precious blood, who neglect therefore his commandments, and do despite unto his grace. Is it our duty to abstain from all manner of connexion with neighbours such as these? This would not be the case, if they were altogether aliens from the Christian name. Neither must we so separate from such Christians as have the name and only little of the reality. We must abstain from taking part in their evil doings. We must strive to pray and to be sanctified in the midst of iniquity. Oh, let us then remember that we must be sanctified through the truth, and that God's word is truth. Oh, let us endeavour to understand more and more this precious word of God, revealed to us through Jesus Christ. Oh, let us understand it, if we may, so as to believe and do it; so as to be sanctified, made holy in heart and life, even as He is holy.

Christ prayeth for all believers.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

¹ Ch. 12. 26.

§ 343. *How we should pray to be one.*

In this passage we see the whole of our Lord's prayer for his apostles extended unto all who should believe on Him through their word; extended therefore unto us. For through their preaching at the first, and through the teaching of those whom they sent, as well as by the word which they set down in writing, through these means it is that we have Christian faith. For us then our Lord put up this prayer; and especially in this part of it, for us He prayed that we all should be one. Oh, let us then hath pray and strive that we may be all of one mind, all of one faith, all of one baptism, all of one church!

The degree of unity here prayed for is as close as can be conceived: "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." This is no mere agreement in a few general and obvious truths. This is no cold assent in common to things far which we have no great concern. It is a close concord of heart and mind. It is to agree in what we feel most deeply. It is for us to trust in the same merits of Christ for salvation, to hope in the same heaven for our home, to walk by the same rule of faith and practice. And that such unity is here meant, may be further shewn by the object for which our Lord desires it: "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." For what circumstance in the whole aspect of the Christian community gives more scandal to those who are here meant by the world, than our dissensions in religious matters? "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," 1 Cor. 1. 12, this is the kind of disunion which makes the cause of the Gospel a jest to the scoffer amongst ourselves, a matter of doubt to the heathen abroad. This it is, this diversity of faith and discipline, these jealousies and hearthurnings which come of that diversity; these, and the still more sad diversity between our profession and our practice, this it is that keeps the world lying in ignorance and sin, this that hinders the fulfilment of the divine glory in the dispensation of Jesus Christ.

How can there be in us the love with which the Father loved the Son, if we are indifferent to this union which the Son so earnestly desires? If we take no pains for all to be one, even as far all to be sober, and pure, and just? All, indeed, as far as we can see, will never be so whilst the world lasts. So neither will all be honest, all true, all temperate. But this hinders not our trying to make them so in the one case, it hinders not our trying to be so ourselves; it hinders not, or at least it ought not to hinder, in the one case; neither then ought it to hinder in the other. Let us then labour after such unity as we may conceive to exist between the Father and the Son. Let us labour by subduing every thought and wish to the will of God our Saviour. Let us labour by helping thus to subdue, in others, the wilfulness of man to the truth of Christ. Let us labour for unity in faith; let us labour for unity in love. Let us love as one, even if we cannot believe as one. Let us, as nearly as we can, love as one; and believe more uniformly, that so we may be more united also in love. Let us labour by a more watchful attention to our conduct, in every thing that may help to forward these holy ends. Let us labour by a more earnest utterance of our prayers that we may keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Grant, Lord, that all we who are called by thy name, all we who are baptized into thy faith, may daily be more and more of one mind, as to what we have to believe and do! Far be from us the heat of party, or the turbulence of sect! Far be from us either the spirit of persecution, or the pride of factious opposition! Far be from us the mad attempt to work, by the wrath of man, the righteousness of God! See James 1. 20. Make us to be one, make us to help others to be one, as Thou, and the Father, and the Holy Ghost, are One; as far from differing in thought, as far from variance in purpose, as far from envy, jealousy, and strife! Make us one in knowledge of the one only truth, one in the faith of the one only God, one in the entire reliance for our salvation on that one only name given unto men whereby they may be saved! See Acts 4. 12. Make us one in the doing what we know, in fulfilling what we believe; one in the loving of God and of our neighbours. Make us one in the holiness of a Christian life, one in the blessedness of a Christian death, and one in the beholding after death that glory, and sharing in that love, which was thine with the Father before the foundation of the world!

Christ is betrayed and taken.

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, ¹ he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

3 ² Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And

they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, ³ Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year ||.

14 ⁴ Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

¹ Matt. 26. 36

² Matt. 26. 47.

³ Ch. 17. 12.

|| And Annas sent Christ bound unto Caiaphas the high priest, ver. 24.

⁴ Ch. 11. 50.

§ 344. *Patience in adversity.*

The place in which our Lord was betrayed was a garden, to which He had been used often to resort with his disciples. It was in a garden that the first Adam fell; by whose fall all became sinners. It was from a garden that the second Adam was led to death; by whose death all are made alive. What is there of all the things which we behold, that may not teach us some lesson of heavenly wisdom; when even an ordinary garden might remind us, both of how Adam fell, and of how Christ has raised us up? The recollection of his kindness experienced in this place, of the discourses which He had here delivered, of the good offices which He had here performed, these might have been enough to make Judas hesitate, ere here at least he would betray his Master. These might have induced the disciples also to remain with Him, instead of going their way and forsaking Him. But in every particular of this sad history, we find wrong aggravated by cruelty, and suffering embittered by neglect. Our Saviour endured for us not only death, but a death under most painful circumstances. Not only was He betrayed by one apostle, and deserted by the rest, but this took place in the very garden, whither He oftentimes resorted with them all.

And yet at this very moment of aggravation, next to yielding up Himself meekly to his enemies, He employed Himself in pleading for the escape of his friends. "Whom seek ye?" He first asks the band that came from the chief priests and Pharisees, as if anxious to prevent their taking any one of his disciples by mistake. And afterwards, when at the words of Him, who spake as never man spake, see ch. 7. 46, they went backward, and fell to the ground, He asked them again, "Whom seek ye?" He told them who He was, and added, "if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." This St. John tells us was a fulfilment of the saying which He spake, "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." Ch. 17. 12. So that this text like many others has two applications, the one to safety in this present world, the other to everlasting salvation. And thus it may well signify to us, that Christ wills not that his disciples should undergo on earth any more of affliction than is good for them; and also that He takes great care for the final salvation of those, to whom it is given of the Father to be believers in Him. If then we believe, let us be assured that Christ would have us to be saved. Let us be aware that if we are hereafter lost, it will be for no lack of love on his part, but only for our fault and folly.

Whilst our Lord was setting this signal example of meekness, patience, and forbearance, Simon Peter gave way to the passion of the moment, and endeavoured to defend his Master with the sword. "The servant's name was Malchus." This seems to be mentioned by way of reference to the miracle which St. Luke tells us was wrought on this occasion; Luke 22. 51; that the reader of this Gospel at the time when it was written, might have better means to inquire into the fact. And this is one among many passages, which shew that St. John, besides other objects in his writing, designed especially to supply certain points of importance, which had been omitted by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This was the firm purpose to which our Lord had attained by his prayer so earnestly expressed, that the will of his Father might be done. See Matt. 26. 37—46. This should be our resolution, whatever wrongs we meet with, whatever injuries or insults, whatever sorrows or sufferings are heaped upon our heads; not to meet them with revenge, but with forgiveness, not with the violence which would wield the sword, but with the patience which would keep it in the sheath, with the love which delights to drink of any cup that is given by a Father's hand.

Christ is denied of Peter.

15 ¹ And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals: for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I

said nothing.

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

24 ² Now Annas had sent him bound unto Cniaphas the high priest.

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. ³ They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

26 One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

¹ Matt. 26. 58.

|| Or, with a rod.

² Matt. 26. 57.

³ Matt. 26. 69.

§ 345. *Worldly ease.*

"Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple," by which St. John means himself. For he it was who was known unto the high priest, he whose love was so fervent as for him to go in with Jesus into the palace. This was after our Lord had interceded with the officers to let the disciples go. Ver. 8. It was when all the rest had forsaken Him, and fled. See Matth. 26. 56. It was out of desire to see the end, that St. Peter thus followed his Lord. And with this desire no doubt there was mixed up an affectionate regard for his Master. Yet whilst St. John seems to have stayed with Christ throughout, and certainly was with Him at the end; see ch. 19. 26; St. Peter we here read denied Him thrice. When the one went in with Jesus, into the palace of the high priest, the other stood at the door. When the one was standing by the Accused, the other was warming himself at the fire. When the one was at the foot of the cross, we hear not of the other at that painful post. Let us pray and strive that our love for Christ may hold out to the end, in whatever we undertake for his service. Let us not stay at the door. Let us not answer, when we are inquired of, as though we were ashamed to own the truth. And if ever we have been prevailed on so to do, or if in any way we have been overtaken in sin, least of all let us allow ourselves to enjoy at ease the fruit of our iniquity. Let us not stand with Peter at that fire, to which we have been admitted by the denial of our Lord. Let us not take to ourselves the credit we have gained by falsehood; let us not eat the bread we have earned by sabbath breaking; let us not be covered with clothes which have been purchased by fraud, extortion, or oppression.

Behold, whilst Peter stood thus at ease before the fire, Jesus was being questioned by the high priest, and buffeted by the hands of his officers. And perhaps it was what he saw or heard of his Master's sufferings, that inclined him, through cowardice, to persist in his denial. Such is the peace which "the world giveth." Ch. 14. 27. To be at ease in the midst of misery. To have no feeling for the pain which abounds around us, for the eternal wrath which is hanging over ourselves. To go on from day to day, without a thought of God, or a regard for Christ, without caring for the soul, or trembling for its salvation. To care for earth, though not for heaven; to love ourselves, though not our Lord; to be afraid of death, though not afraid of hell; to stand in awe of man, though not of God; such is the peace which "the world giveth." But whilst thus we lead a life of carelessness, thoughtlessness, and ease, the Lord who died for us suffers in our behalf. Again He hears the words of scorn. Again the blows are heaped upon his head. Again the nails pierce his hands and feet. We crucify Him afresh.

How greatly did it aggravate the sin of the apostle, that his Master, at the very moment of being denied by him, was enduring all these wrongs for his sake! How forcibly is the mention of Christ's sufferings introduced into the account of Peter's transgression! How affecting, how instructive is the contrast between the ease and negligence of the one, and the meekness and fortitude of the other! Immediately before what is here said of Jesus, Peter, we are told, stood with the servants, "and warmed himself." And immediately at the end it is repeated, "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." It was at that moment that "he denied it, and said, I am not." Oh, how much better had it been for him, to have been sharing the blows which were inflicted on our Lord! Oh, how much better must it ever be for us, instead of taking our pleasure with our neighbours, to be taking up our cross with Christ! Never let us be ashamed of his shame: never averse to "esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" but thankful to think, and forward to profess, that He was "bruised for our iniquities," and that "with his stripes we are healed." Is. 53. 4, 5.

Christ is questioned by Pilate.

28 ¹ Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto || the hall of judgment: and it was early; ² and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

32 ³ That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

33 ⁴ Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*.

39 ⁵ But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

40 ⁶ Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

¹ Matt. 27. 2.

⁴ Matt. 27. 11.

|| Or, *Pilate's house*.

² Acts 10. 28.

³ Matt. 27. 15.

⁵ Matt. 20. 19.

⁶ Acts 3. 14.

§ 346. *The preference of truth.*

The Jews thought that they would be defiled by going into the judgment hall; so they led Jesus into it, and themselves stayed on the outside; and thought themselves no less qualified to eat the passover. As if there were not more of sin in accusing the innocent, than in entering into the hall of judgment! As if this stopping at the door, whilst they promoted the iniquity which was going on within, were not to strain at a gnat and to swallow a camel! See Math. 23. 24. How many are there guilty of a like mistake, in venturing up to the very threshold of offence, cherishing forbidden desires, harbouring revengeful or sullen thoughts; whilst they abstain from the act of wickedness, only out of the fear of man! Let us never try to go as nigh to sin as we suppose we safely may, but as far towards perfection as we possibly can. Let us neither enter the hall of unjust judgment, nor prefer an unjust accusation. Let us neither do the act of sin, nor sinfully desire to do it.

The Jews were not allowed by their Roman masters to inflict death on any one. And therefore they were unwilling to judge Jesus themselves, because they were resolved to judge Him worthy of death. Thus He was handed over to the judgment of the Romans. And as it was the practice of the Romans to punish malefactors, by nailing them to a cross, the saying of our Lord, that He should be lifted up, was thus exactly brought to pass. See ch. 12. 32. And by this means the entire innocence of our Lord was more thoroughly made manifest. For Pilate, acting as his judge, acknowledged that he knew nothing of the matter of accusation, and put it to Himself to accuse Himself; first asking Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" and then inquiring, "What hast thou done?" To this Jesus replied, that his kingdom was not of this world; observing that if it were, his followers would have been found using in his behalf the force of worldly arms. And this answer seemed to have satisfied Pilate, who after this first examination bare witness to his prisoner, "I find in him no fault at all." Which words should remind us how our Lord was a Lamb without spot, a man without sin, a perfect atonement for the sins of the whole world.

And on the other hand, it is set down against Barabbas, that he "was a robber." This shows us how thoroughly the Jews were prejudiced, how determined to put Christ to death; how glad to add this insult to his sufferings, that they preferred to save a robber's life. And what a preference was this, a robber whom they knew to be a robber, to One whose whole employment was doing good? What a preference is that which is often seen in the world, the wicked chosen and the good rejected! What a preference is ours, if ever we, in like manner, prefer evil to good, darkness to light, falsehood to truth! Far be it from us to choose with the people Barabbas instead of Christ, robbery and wrong instead of honesty and right! Far be it from us to ask with Pilate, "What is truth?" without meaning more than he did, to love it when we know it! Truth is the thing that really is. That God made all things, this is truth. That Christ redeemed all mankind, this is truth. That the Holy Ghost makes holy all God's people, this is truth. That sin leads of a certainty to hell, and holiness to heaven, this is truth. All this truth we know. For to this, and other truth akin to this, our Lord has borne faithful witness. All this truth we know. All this let us take pains to understand. All this let us rejoice to be assured of. All this let us prefer to the false suggestions of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Lord, let us ask, not in scorn but prayer, Lord, what is truth? Tell us, for Thou only canst reveal it! Tell us, and incline us to hear thy voice! Tell us, and incline us to obey!

Christ answereth Pilate.

1 Then ¹ Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him:

for I find no fault in him.

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

¹ Matt. 27. 26.

§ 347. *The abuse of authority.*

In Pilate we see the fearful consequences of loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. See ch. 12. 43. First he scourged Jesus, though he had before acknowledged, "I find in him no fault at all." Ch. 18. 38. And this indignity he seems to have inflicted with a view to satisfy the Jews, and to save the life of his prisoner. As if he might safely do so great wrong, nay, any wrong at all, in order to avoid doing a greater wrong! As if it were any more allowable to scourge, than to crucify, one in whom he could find no fault! Having inflicted this scourging, he suffered also the soldiers to mock and evil entreat our Lord, with a crown of thorns, and a purple robe, with blows, and with words of insult. For this, Pilate as well as they, must answer; since he who forbids not, and prevents not wrong, in those who are under his command, shares the guilt of the wrong that is committed. Let masters remember this of their servants, and parents of their children. And let all those who are under authority submit to those who are set over them, as in the Lord, in the exercise of power for the Lord's sake, with a view to the honouring of his name.

Pilate, having thus abused his authority, again testified in behalf of Jesus to the Jews, that He was faultless; and brought Him forth in his distressed condition, in the hope that the people would relent. "Behold the man!" Is this the man whom you accuse of setting up for a king? See how far He is from any such condition. Behold Him in captivity, in pain, in scorn. By such an artifice, instead of by plain dealing, did Pilate try to deliver the innocent. Never, where we have a duty to perform, may we seek to gain our object by hypocrisy! Never, when we have wrongs to redress, or right judgment to give, or the innocent to deliver or defend, never may we be ashamed to avow our principles, never afraid to declare the truth!

Pilate wishes not to crucify Christ; but see how entirely he consents to let the Jews do that, which he would not do himself. "Take ye him, and crucify him." He minded not their sinning, though he would not risk the being punished himself. How singularly is this conduct at variance with the affectionate declaration of St. Paul: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren!" Rom. 9. 3. We can scarce commit any greater sin ourselves, than to let our brethren sin instead of us. We might as well crucify Christ afresh ourselves, as expose Him to be crucified by the world. The Jews answered to this proposal, that they might judge Jesus according to their law, He ought to die, and they would have Him put to death, "because he made himself the Son of God." And this answer having alarmed the governor, he inquired further of Christ whence He was. "But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" Here was the great mistake of Pilate. He considered not that whatever he did as governor, he did it under the controul of an Almighty Being, as minister of an ordinance which was of God. This lesson, therefore, our Lord here teaches both him and us. "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Because magistrates have the sanction of divine authority, because it is from God that they derive their power, to be used for the benefit of man, therefore the abuse of it either by themselves or others is doubly sinful. Never let us then make public justice the implement of private malice. Never let us indulge our own evil passions, under the pretence of letting the law take its course. Never let us profess that it is out of a zeal for justice that we accuse the conduct of our brethren, when in truth it is out of our own anger, enmity or pride. To use the law or the magistrate for such purposes, is to use them for a cloak of iniquity. And the more excellent is the ordinance we abuse, and the more surely it is an ordinance of God, we have, in abusing it, "the greater sin."

Christ is crucified.

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.

13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the *place of a skull*, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

¹ Matt. 27. 31.

§ 348. *Vain profession.*

Pilate here still presents to us the painful spectacle of a double-minded man, "unstable in all his ways." James 1. 8. The faithful rebuke which he had received from Jesus, ver. 11, made him again attempt "to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." And in like manner, when Pilate once more put it to them, "Shall I crucify your King? the chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar." This they said, in order to work upon the fears of the governor; it being well known that the Cæsar who then reigned at Rome, was one of the most jealous and most cruel of mankind. "Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified." When he found his own interest likely to be concerned, this seems to have determined him more than any thing else. He thought no more of the justice or injustice of the case. He gave up the innocent to the malice of his enemies. Thus ended his endeavours to release Jesus. Thus end all good intentions which flow merely from kind feeling, and which are not founded on the love of God. They are too weak for competition against the fear of man. Whilst it ministers to our pleasure, or serves our purpose, we may prefer to do right. But when to do wrong is more agreeable or more profitable, then, if we be not netting on Christian principle, there is no hope that we shall do right any longer.

"And they took Jesus, and led him away." Behold, how they led Him! "he bearing his cross." They laid on Him the cross on which He was to suffer. They made Him carry to the place where He was to suffer, this instrument of a painful and shameful death. Behold, whither they led Him forth! "into a place called the place of a skull;" a place so called as being a place where malefactors were put to death, a place strewed perhaps with the bones of the deceased, or noted for having been once so strewed. There in this place of shame "they crucified him;" they nailed Him to the cross. "They crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." Now then we may say with Pilate, "Behold the man!" Ver. 5. See nailed to that cross, the hands that healed, the feet that went about doing good. The tongue which there cries aloud in agony, hearken, it is the same that used to speak in mercy, it is the same which will hereafter utter sentence on mankind! "Behold the man," or rather as Pilate expressed it afterwards, "Behold your King." The man they crucified is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Let us endeavour to see Him, as He is, our King. Let us remember Him as One to whom we owe all duty, all allegiance. Let us serve Him not only with fear, but with love. For behold, it is for us that He is crucified.

Pilate having gratified the Jews in giving up our Lord to death, seems to have purposed to affront them, in the title which he wrote upon the cross: "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS." This was written in three languages; a fact which accounts for its being written differently in the three Gospels where it occurs, it being taken probably in each from a different language. In this inscription, though the governor wrote the truth, he knew not the true meaning of what he said. He wrote the truth, without meaning the truth, without intending any honour to Jesus Christ. Thus fares it also with that formal worship, which is often offered by those Christians who crucify their Lord. They profess perhaps his faith aright; they may repeatedly declare that they believe in God, and in Jesus Christ his only Son, their Lord. They may acknowledge Christ for the King, not only of the Jews, but of themselves. And yet all their professions and all their prayers are but like this inscription, empty words, which draw down no blessing on the worshippers.

Lord, may we own Thee for our King, by loving to obey thy will! Lord, may we write upon thy cross, by our faith in thy merits, and by our zeal in thy work! May we write Thee our King! May we write ourselves thy subjects! And that which we have thus written from our hearts, Lord, let it be never blotted out!

Christ giveth up the ghost.

23 ¹ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat: now the coat was without seam, || woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, 'They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of * Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the

disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, ² that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

¹ Matt. 27. 35.

|| Or, wrought.

² Psalm 22. 18.

* Or, Cleopas.

³ Psalm 69. 21.

§ 349. *The Scripture must be fulfilled.*

Whilst Jesus was hanging on the cross, the soldiers were making spoil of his garments. This may remind us how often men are employed in heaping up riches by robbery and wrong, when they should be thinking of being saved through Christ on the cross. One portion of our Lord's dress they divided into four, "to every soldier a part." But because the coat was without seam, they were unwilling to rend it, and they therefore "cast lots for it, whose it should be." This may signify to us the iniquity of a practice very common amongst Christians, under the name of gaming. Play we call it, when men cast lots for that, which should clothe the naked and feed the hungry. Play we call it, when men stake on trifles the welfare of their immortal souls. For what less than this is hazarded, when time is wasted, and temper aggravated, and money coveted, and those means consumed on sinful pleasure, which, if they can be spared from necessary expense, should be devoted to Christian almsgiving?

From the covetousness and gambling of the soldiers, let us turn to observe what was the employment of our Lord, whilst He was yet hanging on the cross. Let us take his behaviour as a pattern for our own, under any affliction which it may please God to lay upon us. The first lesson we may hence derive is this, that in the midst of our own troubles, we should be mindful of the afflictions of our neighbours. And this point in our Lord's example is most important; for it is commonly to be observed that sorrow, or pain, or sickness, makes men fretful, and perverse, and selfish. We are apt to think that the convenience of all around us must give place to the relief of our more urgent distress. If ever we are thus tempted in our suffering to offend, let us bethink ourselves of Christ in the agony of the cross, turning with concern to his devoted mother, and to his beloved disciple, and saying to the one, "Behold thy son," and to the other, "Behold thy mother."

Secondly, we may here learn, that we ought to feel desirous, in all our sufferings, to fulfil the will of Almighty God. We should endeavour, whatever we have to suffer, we should endeavour, like our Lord, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled. They are the Word of God; and they have taught us that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Heb. 12. 6. They have assured us that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4. 17. Let us help towards its doing so, by endeavouring to bear affliction as God would have us. Let us receive it as his dispensation; and so use it, that it may redound to his honour. Then we shall bear cheerfully whatever He lays on us to be borne; and we shall thankfully acknowledge, when death itself shall come, that it is good for us to depart. Life, though it be full of trouble, will be full of hope. And death, though it be full of terror, will be also full of joy. "It is finished." Such were the last words our Saviour uttered. "It is finished." The Father's counsel is brought to pass. The Scriptures are fulfilled. The redemption of mankind is wrought. The power of the enemy is vanquished. The sufferings of the body are at an end. The moment of glory is at hand. Thus may we have grace to think of our own severest sufferings! Thus may we have grace to speak with our own dying breath!

And of this let us feel assured, that whether or no our will be thus resigned to the will of God, his will must surely be accomplished in us. The Scripture was fulfilled, not only by Christ purposely, but by the soldiers without their intending it. Their parting of his garments was as exact an accomplishment of the word of God, as his receiving the vinegar. Only herein lay the important difference, they designed their own pleasure, He desired to do the Father's will. And only herein will be the difference at the end; that whilst the will of God will be fulfilled in the endless joy of them that love his word, it will take effect no less certainly in the endless misery of such as love their own will only. Far be it from us then to resist his pleasure! Far be it from us to disbelieve his word! Far be it from us, in sufferings of our own, to be unconcerned for our brethren! Far be it from us to be cold or careless, to be wasteful, idle, or covetous, whilst we contemplate the sufferings and the death of Christ!

Christ is buried.

31. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36 For these things were done, ¹ that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

37 And again another scripture saith, ² They shall look on him whom they pierced.

38 ³ And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

¹ Num. 9. 12. Exod. 12. 46. Ps. 34. 20.

² Zech. 12. 10.

³ Matt. 27. 57.

§ 350. *That death is nigh to us.*

How carefully did the Jews observe the day next before the sabbath, which used to be called "the preparation!" Such at least was the case with the sabbath of their greater festivals; when "that sabbath day was an high day." How well might we learn hence to spend the day before our sabbath in some manner, more like to a preparation, for the day following, than to a summing up of the business of the week! Never let us crowd into this last day of our week more than its usual share of work. Never let us on this day so weary our body or mind, as for us to need more than our usual slumber on the sabbath. Let it be to us also "the preparation." Let us clear up all arrears of worldly work, that we may have on the day following less distraction of thought from the work of heaven. And by diligence in the days which come before, let us take care that the arrears are not too heavy for the day, the day on which we ought to work the least rather than the most of all the six. Happy is that Christian labourer, who early in each week has done the hardest of his work, who early in his life has fought the chief of his good fight, and who after the example of the miracle at Cana, has kept the best till the last! See chap. 2. 10.

How anxiously does St. John here testify to what took place after the death of Christ; how the soldier pierced his side; how out of it came blood and water; how not a bone of Him was broken! This is chiefly in order to satisfy us that Christ was really dead. For this is sure to be the case, whenever the water is let out which is enclosed in the region of the heart. The certainty of his death may in like manner be concluded from his having been embalmed after the manner of the Jews. For no one could handle a body, to wind it up in linen and spices, without knowing whether it were really dead. And no one, least of all two faithful disciples, would have laid the body in the sepulchre, whilst there remained any even the least signs of life.

And why is it so important for us to be assured that Christ was really dead? Chiefly for these two reasons following; the one, that we might be satisfied that our sins are atoned for; the other that we might be fully assured that Christ did truly rise from the dead. For we are instructed by the Law, which was "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," Gal. 3. 24, that the death of the victim is necessary to the effect of the sacrifice. See Levit. 17. 11. We experience also in the visitation of death the most fearful of all the consequences now known of sin. And we are assured, by the whole tenour of the Gospel, that it was only by the death of Christ, that satisfaction could be made for the sin of man.

And if, in our own liability to this awful change, we would have some certain ground of hope, where could we possibly find it, if Christ had not really risen from the dead, and unless therefore He had first really died? The sepulchre to us is "nigh at hand." We must expect at no very distant day to return unto the dust from which we were taken. We may be young. Yet even youth we know is not always safe, and cannot long abide. Or we may be old, and so used to living; that we find it hard to think seriously of dying. But the longer we have lived we have the more ground to feel a lively apprehension that the sepulchre is "nigh at hand." We may be strong and healthy; and yet health and strength will secure us neither from sudden accident, nor from the speedy visitation of acute disease. We may be weakly, and therefore watchful against sickness, careful of our safety, and apt to think that we have so much the longer life in store. But no care, no watchfulness of ours, can ensure us against the last enemy of all mankind. To the weakly as well as to the strong, to the young as well as to the old, to all ages and to each sex, to every rank and station; to the busy and to the idle, to them that have much to do and to them that do nothing; to the righteous and to the wicked, to them that through faith work righteousness, and to them that through unbelief work iniquity; the sepulchre is in all cases "nigh at hand."

Christ not in the sepulchre.

1 The ¹first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the ²other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5 And he stooping down, ~~and looking in,~~ saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

¹ Matt. 28. 1. Mark 16. 1.

² Ch. 13. 23. & 21. 20.

§ 351. *How we ought to know the Scriptures.*

How fearful a thing must death be, if even a burial place is apt to fill us with a feeling of alarm! How few would be willing, like Mary, to visit a sepulchre whilst it is "yet dark!" What is it that in such a case we are afraid of! What is it that makes our knees to tremble, and our blood run cold? Something there may be of weakness in our corrupted nature, which cleaves even to them that are regenerate, and which makes the hearts even of the faithful sicken, as they walk among the remains of the departed. But where such awe amounts to active fear, it must be chiefly out of ignorance or sin, out of ignorance which is sinful, because we might know better, out of such sin as we might avoid, because Christ has given us access to his grace. Let us learn from Mary Magdalene not to fear where no fear is. See Ps. 53. 6. Let us think with her, when we are in a place of trembling, let us think of Christ our Lord, let us consider how He has loved us. Let us endeavour so entirely to love Him, that our love may cast out fear. See 1 John 4. 18.

Mary, on reaching the sepulchre, found the stone which had been put at the door rolled away. Hence she supposed that they had "taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre." Upon this Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved, came and looked into the sepulchre, and saw there only the clothes in which the body of Jesus had been wound; "And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." This fact should have led them to doubt whether the body of Jesus had been stolen. Since what is done by stealth is usually done in too great haste to admit of any such order and composure. "Then went in also that other disciple;" by whom St. John means himself. "And he saw, and believed;" by which he means that he believed what Mary had said, that the Jews had really taken away the body of the Lord. And their believing this seems to be mentioned on purpose that we may know, how surely they saw that his body was not there. "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." And therefore in no other manner could they account for his body being gone, than by supposing that the Jews had taken it away.

And here let us observe what mistakes we are sure to fall into, if we know not the Scripture. The disciples might have understood from the prophecies in the Old Testament, that the Lord would rise from the dead. And they would then have been filled with joy, instead of sorrow, on finding the sepulchre empty. How many things might we also learn from Scripture, which now we know not! How surely, if we knew them, would they minister to our joy! What doubt can we encounter in our faith, for which here we might not find explanation? What difficulty could we meet with in our practice, for which here we might not meet with most safe direction? What affliction can befall us, and consolation not here be in store? What joy, and it not here be written, how it may help us towards joy eternal?

But alas, how much wiser are the children of this world, in their generation, than the children of light! See Luke 16. 8. How well aware were the Jews of the report that Jesus would rise again from the dead, whilst the disciples as yet "knew not the scripture!" See Matt. 27. 63. How gladly does the world profit by the least hint of worldly wisdom! How strange that Peter and John, with so many things to awaken their attention at the sepulchre, should turn away without further inquiry, towards their own home! It was but now that "they ran both together;" and were in such haste to know the truth of what had happened, that "the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." One while we are vying with each other who shall know most, who do best. But how soon does our holy emulation flag! How soon, unless we watch, does our zeal abate! How easily are we disheartened by the slightest disappointment, or discouraged by having our hope deferred! Let us endeavour rather to take courage from the least ground of hope, than to despond on slight instances of failure. Let us interpret whatever little we yet know of Scripture, so as to raise in us a desire to know more. Let us profit by whatever little belief we have in Christ, so as to help us towards more firm assurance of faith.

Christ appeareth to Mary.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept; she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith, unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

§ 352. *Christ the Saviour of all.*

The disciples had gone homewards, on finding, as they supposed, that the body of Jesus was taken away. "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." The more fervent is our love, we shall be the less inclined to enjoy even the allowable comforts of our home, when we may otherwise hope to minister to the glory of our Lord. Whilst the others were gone home, it was something for Mary to stand and weep. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt. 5. 4. Where there is wrong, which we cannot redress, where there is suffering, and we are not able to relieve it, where there is sin, and we cannot prevent the sinner, let us at least feel concern in his behalf; and if we have nothing else that we can do, let us weep much, feel much, pray much.

To Mary thus staying when the rest were gone away, thus weeping because she knew not what to do for good, first two angels appear for her consolation, and afterwards our Lord Himself. "Woman, why weepest thou?" Such was the kind inquiry which was in both cases addressed to this affectionate disciple. "Woman, why weepest thou?" These were the first words that appear to have been spoken by our Lord, after his arising from the dead. It is as if He would declare, that through his death and rising again, tears should at once lose their bitterness, and should in the end be utterly abolished. Why should they lament, who have assurance from the Lord, that like Him they shall arise from the dead? How can they sorrow, as though they had no hope, who have the prospect of life eternal? Sinner, why weepest thou? Thy sins are forgiven thee. Mortal, why weepest thou? Thy death is the gate of heaven. Parent bereft of child, or child of parent, husband widowed of wife, or wife of husband; why weep ye? "Thy brother shall rise again." Ch. 11. 23. The friends whom you have lost are found in Christ. Why weep then at that change which you may believe is for their good, at which they, as you should hope, will rejoice for evermore?

These words of Christ were spoken, and He Himself appeared unto Mary, not till after she had "turned herself back;" on her way probably to tell the disciples of her having seen the angels. Mary at first knew not that it was Jesus who had spoken unto her. But as soon as she knew, she said, "Rabboni; which is to say, Master." Now from St. Matthew, 28. 9, we learn that the women, either on this or on a later occasion, as soon as they knew the person of our Lord, attempted to hold Him by the feet. To some such attempt as this we must refer what is here said to Mary, "Touch me not." Be not anxious to hold me now, for I shall yet stay some time longer upon earth. "I am not yet ascended unto my Father." I am not now gone away visibly into heaven. This will however soon take place. Go therefore, and let the disciples know of it. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Here let us observe how Christ says, "my Father, and your Father," not our Father; "my God, and your God," not our God; as if He purposed to teach us by these words, that God is his Father in other sort than ours, and that Christ is the Son of God in other sort than we are his sons. Whereas for us He has left instruction when we pray to say, "Our Father." Matt. 6. 9. And He would have us also always consider Himself as "our Lord and Saviour." 2 Pet. 1. 1. For so do his apostles continually describe Him; not the Saviour, as of a few, but our Saviour, as of many, as of all; though specially of those that believe. See 1 Tim. 4. 10. And in so regarding Him we shall continually be reminded, as He would have us, at once of the love which we owe to Him, and of that which for his sake we ought to feel towards each other.

O Father, be Thou our Father! O God, be Thou our God! O Lord, be Thou our Lord and Saviour; a Saviour to us and to our brethren; to their brethren; yea, to all mankind! All deeply need thy help. All have fallen. All without Thee are lost. All, without the redemption of thy blood, are sure to perish everlastingly. Make known the glad tidings of thy salvation to them that yet sit in darkness! Make helpful the atonement of thy death, to them that have never known thy name! Help us to make others to ascend, that so we may ascend ourselves, to thy Father and our Father, to thy God and our God!

Christ appeareth to the disciples, satisfieth Thomas.

19 ¹ Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

23 ² Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and

put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

30 ³ And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

¹ Mark 16. 14.² Matt. 18. 18.³ Ch. 21. 25.§ 353. *That we have sufficient evidence for belief.*

It was on the first day of the week that the disciples were assembled, when Christ appeared to them. This was the day on which He had arisen from the dead. This is the day which has ever since been known in the Christian church as the "Lord's day." Rev. 1. 10. At his appearance they rejoiced, though they had so lately forsaken Him. They rejoiced; and He mercifully confirmed their joy, saying, "Peace be unto you."

After repeating this kind encouragement, Jesus added, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Here He gave to his apostles the same kind of office, though with a very different degree of authority, as that which He Himself had exercised on earth, namely, to be ministers of reconciliation between God and man. He was Himself, as He was man, in this sense commissioned. He thus sent his apostles; and they afterwards, in like manner, according to their commission, sent others. And in order to fit them for their office, and to signify to them what their office was, "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" words which seem plainly to prove, that the Holy Ghost, which proceeds from the Father, proceeds also from the Son, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." This commission, thus expressed, meant not to the apostles any more than it means to their successors, that they might remit sins according to their own will and pleasure. For who, as the Jews justly asked, "who can forgive sins but God only?" Mark 2. 7. It means no more than that as ministers of Christ, they can forgive those sins which He declares to be forgiven. As the magistrate neither acquits nor condemns of his own self, but only as he is commissioned by the king, only as he is instructed by the law, so should ministers of Christ, as his servants, remit or retain sins according to his Gospel.

But what an opportunity was this that Thomas lost, by not being with the disciples on the Lord's day! How manifold are the blessings which those Christians miss who forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is. See Heb. 10. 25. Thomas "was not with them when Jesus came," and when told of his having come, Thomas would not believe. What evidence have we here that the apostles were not weakly credulous! What condescension is here manifest in Christ, that He satisfied even unreasonable scruples! He offered to Thomas the very evidence demanded, though it was far more than the case required. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." This was mercy utterly undeserved. This was proof far more than necessary. But so it is that God deals with our perverse understandings. He gives us evidence tenfold more than ought to satisfy us. And so it is that He would move our stubborn hearts, He gives us blessings an hundredfold above our small deserts. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples." Not only did they see all that is here written, but many more things over and above what needed to be set down in this book. Many others indeed are written in the other Gospels: but St. John had a particular object in what he wrote, that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;" that we might have right faith in his being the Word, which was in the beginning with God, which from the beginning "was God." Ch. 1. 1. For it is thus believing that we may have life through his name; it is by believing truly, and by believing also the truth,

Christ appeareth to his disciples fishing.

1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, || Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast there-

fore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

|| Or, Sirs.

§ 354. *The evils of disunion in religion.*

"Jesus shewed himself." He was not seen as He used to be, living all day long with his disciples. He shewed Himself, when He thought it good for them to see Him, when it would be good for us to know that they saw Him. And thus it is written also in the Acts; 10. 40, 41; "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God." So that for God to shew Him and for Christ to shew Himself is the same thing. And that He was shewn only to chosen witnesses, was because these were best qualified to testify to his person; these might best know Him by his words and works, now that his person was in some sort glorified. For that some change had taken place in his appearance, seems to follow from what is said of his shewing Himself, and from the disciples not knowing Him immediately. On this occasion they were employed in their former business of fishing. And to this they seem to have now returned, as their proper work. So little did they as yet understand of Christ's kingdom, or of the office they were to hold in it as teachers! So far were they from taking on themselves the work of preaching the Gospel, so willing to wait till they were duly sent on the day of Pentecost, so contented in the meanwhile with their ordinary employment. In this they had ill success all night. And since their fishing has been interpreted by our Lord, as a sign of their catching men in the gospel net, we may do well to explain their failure by the fact, that Christ was not with them, in their company. For no sooner did He join them, and give them his directions, than they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. So that if we would in this sense catch men, if we would be instruments in God's hands for saving the souls of our brethren, we must seek so good an end, only in the way which is appointed in the Gospel. And thus it is also in the saving of our own souls. We must work as our Lord directs us. We must not do evil that good may come. We must seek for the increase of grace, only by the means which Christ has ordained. Life without Him is night; but it is morning when He is on the shore. Labour without Him is vain; and hunger without Him, unsatisfied. But through his gift we may enjoy, in our spiritual necessities, both fire to warm, and food to nourish. With his blessing, whatever work we undertake for good, our success will be abundant, and yet our net will never break.

"For all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." If we take the net to signify the kingdom of heaven, this may lead us to reflect with thankfulness on the boundless extent of God's mercy in the Gospel. The more can be drawn into that holy company, the greater is the joy of those who are there. The wedding is furnished with guests; "and yet there is room." Luke 14. 22. As long as we have any near us, whom we think that we could help to make more holy, let us endeavour to do so, both for their good and for our own, both to help forward their salvation, and to promote God's glory. And would that we could go on with the similitude, in respect of the concord which should prevail, amongst all Christians of all ages, and of all nations of the world! Would that as the numbers of the church have been increased, its net of unity had been never broken! When the net breaks, the fish are lost. When churches are at variance, souls are in peril; Christians are at a loss for truth, and the world is more slow to believe that they are disciples of Christ. Shame be to the pride and selfishness, to the jealousies and ambition of men, that have made so many rents in the net, so many breaches in the walls of Zion! But thanks be to the goodness and to the grace of God, that what is torn He can mend, what is broken He can repair, what is wounded He can heal, what is severed He can unite! Thanks be to God, that He will make one, in the world which is to come, many who are here estranged from each other!

Christ giveth Peter charge of his lambs.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto

him, Feed my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me! And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

§ 355. *The blessedness of martyrdom.*

The disciples durst not ask Jesus, "Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Having known Him to be dead and buried, they could not divest themselves of awe, on seeing Him again alive. Let us also stand in awe of Him, so as to sin not. Let us fear asking further, of what we might know abundantly from his word. Let us fear to do that which He forbids. Let us fear to neglect that which He commands. But let us temper our fear with love. Let us have love prevail over our fearfulness. For see how, when the disciples were afraid, our Lord encouraged them, saying, "Come and dine." To eat a meal in common, to partake together in the supply of our bodily necessities, this helps to abate our fears of each other, and helps to enlarge our love. And it is well, if only we avoid excess, to offer and receive such hospitality as this. But let us prefer above all others the invitation of our Lord. Let us rejoice far more than at any other feast to eat with Him at his own Supper. Let us listen to his voice thus calling us to Himself, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3. 20.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son of Jonas*, lovest thou me more than these?" The painful fear might by this time be allayed; but there must have yet remained in the apostles a painful regret, for having deserted their Master in his last hours. And especially this feeling must have oppressed the disciple, who had uttered this vain profession, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Matt. 26. 33. To this saying Christ seems here to allude: "Lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." He makes no more comparison of himself with others. He answers not for loving Christ more than his brethren. He answers only for himself. He answers for himself, not on the strength of his own self knowledge, not on the strength of his own self confidence, but only so far as Christ might know him to be strong. "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my Lambs." And the like expression our Lord thrice repeated. "Feed my sheep." And again, "Feed my sheep." What a solemn charge was this to Peter! What a proof to him, and to all the apostles, that the Lord had entirely forgiven them! What a comfortable assurance, that He would yet employ them in the work for which He had chosen them at the first, the making men wise unto salvation! "Lovest thou me?" Though I know, I ask. It is not enough for me to know. It is needful for you to profess your love, it is needful for you to prove it by the devotion of your life. Feed therefore my sheep. Go no more a fishing on this sea of Tiberias. Henceforth catch men. Take the world for the extent of your labours. Seek in it for them that are lost. Help them in it that are helpless. Feed them that are hungry and thirsty after righteousness. Feed them in the pasture of the Gospel; administering both milk for babes, and also strong meat for men.

To this encouraging address our Lord added in a figure a description of the death, by which Peter should glorify God. "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." That is to say, he should be crucified. This is known from history to be the manner in which Peter suffered martyrdom. Here then was one more proof of Christ's forgiveness. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." Heb. 12. 6. And if ordinary suffering be a token that God is gracious to our souls, what must it be to suffer death as martyrs, to perish by the same death as Christ Himself? Who would not wish that he had lived in times, when he might thus have died for Christ? Who would not gladly die in pain, that might be sure to rise in glory? Let us then now be martyrs in our lives, if we may not bear witness unto the faith by death. Let us live in self denial if we have no call to die in shame on the cross. If we are never called upon to be crucified for Christ's sake, let us offer what we value almost as dear as life; let us crucify our will, our passions, our sins.

Christ answereth Peter concerning John.

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple¹ whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said

not unto him, He shall not die: but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

¹ Ch. 13. 23. & 20. 2.

² Ch. 20. 30.

§ 356. *The truth of the Gospel.*

“The disciple whom Jesus loved,” means St. John, the writer of this Gospel. Peter having been told of what should happen to himself, and knowing how St. John was beloved, inquires whether to him there would be vouchsafed any token more strung of his Master’s love, any work more excellent than to feed his Master’s sheep, any chastisement more profitable than the cross, any death more glorious than to be a martyr? “Lord, and what shall this man do?” What shall happen unto him whom Thou lovest? May we know more of the future than Thou hast already thought fit to tell us? May we be told by Thee, who “knowest all things,” ver. 17, may we be told for our present satisfaction the things which shall be hereafter? “Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” We ought not to be curious about that which God has not revealed. We ought not thus to inquire into the future for ourselves, much less ought we to pry into what concerns our brethren. And though chastisement be a token of God’s love, it is not for us to be informed, why He sends it unto some, and withholds it from others, whom He loves. “Follow thou me,” is the rule to each of us for ourselves. “What is that to thee,” is the reply to our inquiry into the allotment of our neighbours. “Follow thou me.” Yea, Lord, we will! Whichever way Thou leadest, it shall be our heart’s desire to walk in thy steps, to work by thy commandments! Yea, Lord, we will follow Thee! whether to be resigned in pain, or in joy soberminded; whether to be contented in want, or in abundance thankful. In the life we live, and in the death we die, we will try, do Thou but help us, to follow Thee!

“Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die;” for they understood that he should live until the coming of Christ, and thus not have to die at all. And they were then under the impression that Christ would soon come to judgment. And so indeed He did soon come to destroy the city of the unbelieving Jews, which seems to be the thing here alluded to; for St. John is known to have lived many years after that event, and to have died in a good old age. But as Christ visited Jerusalem in his wrath, He will also soon visit the world we dwell in. And this is that second coming of his, which we as Christians must continually look for. And how know we, any one of us, but that we may tarry till He come, but that He may come whilst yet we live? Nothing is less likely to be known by man beforehand, than the day and hour of our Lord’s coming. See Matt. 25. 13. Nothing ought to be more familiar to our minds than the apprehension that He might come any day, any hour. “Surely I come quickly;” Rev. 22. 20; this is the testimony of the faithful and true Witness. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand;” Rom. 13. 12; this is the warning of the apostle to the church for ever. We know not what an hour will bring forth; only we know that few are the years of our pilgrimage: it is possible, it is probable, that ere they are fulfilled, the world itself may end.

“This is the disciple,” adds St. John of himself, “which testifieth of these things: and we know that his testimony is true.” All men know that the testimony of an eye witness is the most fit of all others to be relied upon. And here the writer of this Gospel tells us, that he is that very disciple whom Jesus loved, and of whom our Lord spake these words. We know then that his testimony is true. We are certain that he whom Jesus loved, must have been one who loved that which is true, one whom the Holy Spirit of God would guide in his writings into all truth. In his writings, in his true testimony he still tarries, and will tarry, till the coming of his Lord. His words will never die; for they are the words of his Master Christ.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” See then, now that we have finished these four histories of our Lord, see how little we yet know of his patience in well doing, of his words of grace and truth, of his work and labour of love! The world could scarce contain a full account of all He did for fallen man. Eternity would scarce suffice to tell of all his loving kindness unto us his people. But though we know so little, compared with the whole of his goodness, we know much as compared with our ignorance, much as compared with our wants: and oh, how more than much as compared with our deserving! Though the Gospel be in reality but a part, and but a small part of all God’s majesty, of all Christ’s love; it

is to man no less than all in all; it is to man perfect, and whole, and full. It tells us of all that we need here to know. It instructs us in all that we need here to do. It teaches us what to believe in, and how to believe; what to obey, and by what means we may become obedient. It reveals to us of God, how He is holy, and just, and good; of ourselves how we are fallen, and weak, and wicked. It represents to us the Father creating us, the Son redeeming us, the Holy Ghost making us to be holy. It describes to us ourselves as redeemed, born anew to be sons of God, saved from sin, from the bondage of sinning; saved from death, from dying everlastingly; saved through the counsels of the Father, saved through the precious blood of his dear Son; saved through the working of the Holy Spirit in our souls; saved from endless misery, saved for an inheritance of eternal joy.

Amen: so true it is that all which is here written, really did take place! Amen: so true it is, for many other like things Christ did for us! Amen: so kindly did He heal the sick, so graciously did He comfort the afflicted; so completely did He make the blind to see; so wonderfully did He make the dead to live! Amen: so truly was He man, dying for us men, and for our salvation! Amen: so fully was He God, making atonement for the sins of all mankind!

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

The preface to the Acts of the Apostles.

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen :

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to

the kingdom of God :

4 And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

§ 357. *The necessity of divine assistance.*

THE book of the Acts of the Apostles was written by St. Luke. At the beginning of it he refers to his Gospel, which he calls "the former treatise." Both works are written to the same Theophilus. See Luke 1. 3. And the one is evidently a continuation of the other. For St. Luke mentions, in these opening verses, that his Gospel reached down to the very period from which he now begins afresh, namely to the time when Jesus "was taken up," or, in other words, had ascended into heaven. And this happened, he tells us, not till after our Lord "had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." Which commandments, as we learn from the verse following, pertained "to the kingdom of God." So that in this history of what the apostles did, we may expect to see what it was that Christ commanded. For, however different may be the case with us, we believe of these holy men that in most things pertaining to themselves, and in all things relating to the kingdom of God, what Christ commanded, that they did.

Accordingly we have here a record of some of the chief things which they said and did towards preaching the Gospel unto all the world. And yet important as was the work they had in hand, they were instructed not to make any beginning till they had received the Holy Spirit promised by the Father, of which Christ had before spoken. Hence let us take occasion to reflect for ourselves on the necessity of our having help from the same Holy Spirit of God, ere we enter on any good and Christian work.

The apostles witness the ascension of Christ.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 ¹ But ye shall receive || power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And ² when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

¹ Ch. 2. i

|| Or, the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.

² Luke 24. 51.

§ 358. *The advantages of united prayer.*

“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” This was a question uppermost in the minds of the apostles. They were expecting that Jesus, as the Christ, would make the Jews not only not subject to any other nation, but also masters of all the rest. And that some such dominion will in the end be given them may be thought to follow from our Lord’s answer to the apostles, that they must not expect to know the times and seasons, as though the event would at some time happen. But the whole passage seems rather to direct our thoughts to the prevalence of Christ’s spiritual kingdom, by the preaching of the Gospel unto all mankind. And this would lead us to expect, that the sovereignty of the Jews means the heavenly glory of such Jews as shall be altogether Christians, and of such Christians as shall be Jews inwardly, children of Abraham in point of faith. In any case we may here learn, not to pry too curiously into things which it has pleased God to hide. And we may thankfully observe that the power promised to the apostles of bearing witness unto Christ, is a power of which all Christians have a share, a dominion of which we all partake. Only let us so make our light to shine, as that men may glorify our Father which is in heaven, and behold we are both priests and kings with God, we offer sacrifice acceptable unto Him through Christ, we are heirs of a crown of glory.

These were the things of which our Lord had been speaking to the apostles, when “he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” The glorified body was no longer to continue in the sight of mortal men. By a force unknown, by a power inconceivable to us, it was lifted up from the earth, and so continued to rise, until by reason of a cloud they could now no longer see Him. And whilst they continued to look steadfastly towards heaven, two angels informed them of the lesson which they ought hence to learn for their own improvement. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Surely as He then was lifted up, He shall again come down. Our eyes shall behold the same form descend when He returns to judge the world. Oh that we might therefore in the mean time live, so as to rejoice when He shall come again! Oh that we may now so in heart with Him ascend, that with Him we may then dwell for evermore!

Hence therefore let us now note how the apostles spent their time immediately after this exhortation of the angels. They “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” So perhaps we think we should have preferred to live, if we had seen with our own eyes our Lord ascend. But are we not quite sure that He ascended? What matters it whether we have seen or not, if only we have believed? If we receive the Scriptures as God’s word, if we are quite certain that Christ did thus ascend, the effect of his ascension on our hearts should be the same as if we had beheld it. Let us then continue with one accord in prayer and supplication. Let us delight on due occasions to pray in company, whether it be in the congregation of the church, in the assembling of each single household, or in the intercession of friend for friend. Let us not wilfully miss any opportunity of prayer, either public or private. And especially let us rejoice to join in prayer with those, who like the persons here mentioned with honour, are faithful servants of the Lord. How know we how much their earnest supplication might help to make our petitions heard? How know we how much our own petitions may avail, in behalf of those whom we would most wish to help? Let us live more devoutly, that we may pray more successfully. Let us love more heartily, that we may pray more earnestly. For the more we love, we shall be sure to pray the more. And the more we have grace to pray, we shall be enabled also the more to love.

Matthias is numbered with the eleven apostles.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16 Men and brethren; this scripture must needs have been fulfilled¹ which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18² Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood*.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms,³ Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and⁴ his⁵ bishoprick let another take.

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of this ministry, and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

¹ Ps. 41. 9.

² Matt. 27. 7.

³ Ps. 69. 25.

⁴ Ps. 109. 8.

⁵ Or, office, or, charge.

§ 359. *The appointment of ministers, and respect due to their office.*

The casting lots, by way of deciding certain matters of difficulty was a practice allowed and enjoined amongst the Jews; they being under the direct government of Jehovah, who by this method decreed to signify his will. Numb. 26. 55. Thus we are told in the book of Proverbs: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Prov. 16. 33. Already had this solemn ordinance been perverted to purposes of gambling; as we read of the soldiers at the foot of the cross casting lots for our Saviour's garments. In the instance before us, the lot was used by the apostles by way of ascertaining the will of God, in a matter where they had no other means of knowing it. But as our Lord Himself appointed St. Paul by other means, to the holy office, He might very probably design to signify, that this method of casting lots was no longer to be used for discovering the will of God. And he might further intend to shew them that in this business they should have waited, as He had bidden them, for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit which He had promised, ere they entered on any function of their sacred office.

Whether however in this they were right or wrong, St. Matthias "was numbered with the eleven apostles." And in him we have an important instance, of the commission of the ministry being handed on by outward appointment, from those who received it from Christ Himself. St. Peter first proposed the measure to the assembly of one hundred and twenty disciples, all probably themselves preachers and teachers of the Gospel. And he argued from a passage in the Psalms, that as Judas had been lost from amongst their number, it was right that some one else should supply his place. He pointed out also the kind of person who would be qualified for the office, such as had companied with them "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among" them. The object also he stated to be this, that the person chosen might be ordained to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such let us remember is the great business of ministers amongst Christians to the end of time. They must testify of Christ, how He died and rose again from the dead; and how all men must hereafter through his power rise again, either unto good or evil. This witness they ought to bear, not only with their lips, but with their lives; shewing forth that like as Christ is risen from the dead, even so they also walk in newness of life.

And for this end, not only they, but all we also, should pray to Him who knows the hearts of all. We should pray for those who are to be, or who have been, set over us in the Lord as ministers of the Gospel. We should pray that fitting persons may be chosen to take part in this ministry. We should pray that all who have been chosen, may become or continue fitting, to the greater profit of the church. How different are such prayers from the censure, scorn, and scoffing, which are often heaped by the world on the ministers of religion! How greatly would it help us to avoid the slightest approach to such censorious words, if we did but pray daily from the heart, that God would bless his servants in their work! This would indeed be the best of antidotes to all uncharitable thoughts or words, to pray for those whom we are apt to censure, for those of whom we are tempted to think ill. For how could we really pray for any without wishing them all good? And how could we wish them any good, and yet be glad to think ill of them, or to utter evil?

Lord, help us to think well of all! Lord, teach us to pray heartily in behalf of all! For our enemies, that it may please Thee to turn their hearts; for our friends, that they may love Thee even more than they love us; for the church, that it may be enlarged and prosper; and even for the most wicked of the world, that they may be converted and live for ever.

The apostles filled with the Holy Ghost speak with tongues.

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now † when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were ‡ confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying

one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

† Gr. when this voice was made.

‡ Or, troubled in mind.

§ 360. *The communication of faith and grace.*

“Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost,” “and with fire,” Acts 1. 5; Matt. 3. 11, this is what our Lord promised to his apostles. And here we see how the promise was fulfilled. And we should conclude that as by baptism Christians are devoted to the service of their Lord, so by this pouring out of the Spirit the apostles were consecrated to their holy office. “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” What an amazing miracle was this, and how significant of the work which the apostles had to do! Let us consider how great a length of time it takes for any one to learn a new language. Let us consider how sure we feel beforehand, that on meeting with a native of some foreign country we should neither understand nor be understood. Let us consider that this has been the case amongst mankind, ever since the confusion of tongues at Babel. And we shall thus be prepared to feel that as God did then, for the separation of mankind, impose on them diversity of speech, so did He on this occasion give us in some sort community of tongue, that the whole world might be again one people. For since this gift of tongues has been made the means to many nations of their having one hope, one faith, one baptism, we are now far nearer to being one people, so many of us at least as have this blessed hope, than if we had all one language, but different religions.

This then was the great use and propriety of this miracle; it fitted the apostles, and all others who enjoyed the gift, for preaching the Gospel unto all lands. It enabled them to testify that which they had seen and heard of the Lord Jesus, unto both Jew and Gentile in all nations of the earth. It made all other miracles profitable, by empowering those who wrought them to teach for what end they were ordained of God; to say to the sick whom they healed, and to the blind whom they made to see: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Acts 16. 31. Thus whilst the infirmity of Moses, who complains, “I am slow of speech,” Exod. 4. 10, may denote how the Jewish law was meant only for the hearing of a few; the miraculous utterance of the preachers of the Gospel serves to signify and prove, that the glad tidings they had to tell of were designed to instruct, to comfort, and to save, all in every nation that would fear the Lord.

And this was the use to which the apostles immediately applied their new and marvellous ability. For thus did the men of all nations, then assembled at Jerusalem, express their astonishment: “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” They indulged in no idle and vain display of their newly acquired gift. They spake of God’s wondrous work in the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ. Affected the more deeply themselves by the sound they heard from heaven, by the sight they saw of fire not from earth, they were enabled the more forcibly to testify of things which no eye can see, no ear can hear, and no imagination of man’s heart can conceive.

This was the use the apostles made of gifts that were miraculous. This is one chief use that we ought to make, of the grace no less truly supernatural, which God gives in all ages of the church to the disciples of his blessed Son. We must make our light to shine before men, that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven. See Matt. 5. 16. And this is the way we must seek to grow in Christian graces, by prayer and by living at peace amongst each other. For thus were the apostles “all with one accord in one place;” all assembled in one congregation, all of one heart and mind. Oh that Christians in each Christian country, were thus all of one accord! Oh that Christians, in each neighbourhood, thus assembled for divine worship, all in one place! Then might we with reason hope that unbelievers would again ask with amazement “What is this?” Then need we less fear that they would ascribe to any other than a heavenly influence an effect so holy in our lives. Our preaching to the heathen might then prosper, if it were supported by our own practice. And the voice of our prayers might be then better heard in their behalf abroad, if we were first all one at home ourselves.

Peter speaketh of Christ to the Jews.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words :

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ;

17 ' And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams :

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit ; and they shall prophesy :

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :

20 ' The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come :

21 And it shall come to pass, that ¹ whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know :

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain :

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, ' I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved :

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope :

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

¹ Joel 2. 28. Is. 44. 3.

² Joel 2. 31.

³ Rom. 10. 13.

⁴ Ps. 16. 8.

§ 361. *What God hath ordained concerning us.*

It was in mockery that some of those, who heard the apostles speak with tongues, said, " These men are full of new wine." For they must have known that drunkenness, though it might make men talk more than usual, would not help them to talk in languages unknown before. But to these Peter calmly answered, as though they had been in earnest, pointing out the early hour of the day, as an argument to shew that himself and his companions were not likely to be drunken. And this perhaps is the reason why, when he spoke, he is described as " standing up with the eleven ;" that they might be all seen to be truly sober. Let us be careful when we are mocked, or in any way insulted, to preserve that evenness of temper which will enable us to reason calmly with those who thus behave. And especially when the truth of the things which we believe is called in question, or pointed at with scorn, let us both be ready to give to every one, according to our ability, a reason of the hope that is in us ; and also be careful so meekly to bear with our opponent, so gently and affectionately to reply, that we may justify the profession of our lips, by the effect of our faith upon our lives.

The argument of the apostle was of a kind to be conclusive with those who heard him. For they were all either Jews or proselytes, collected on occasion of the feast from the neighbouring nations, and probably acquainted with those prophecies which are here alluded to. Greatly should we be moved by such passages as these, to acquaint ourselves in like manner with the ancient prophets ; to study the volume of the elder covenant for our better help in understanding the latter one. All is written for our instruction. And in all, holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And the scribe rightly instructed for the kingdom of God should be able to bring out of his treasure things new and old. See Matt. 13. 52.

St. Peter shewed that what had happened on this occasion was no more than the fulfilment of a prophecy, that thus the Holy Spirit should be poured out, " before that great and notable day of the Lord come." And hence he turns his address, to urge on their attention the proofs of Jesus being their Lord and Christ, arguing from his resurrection, which was itself a most striking fulfilment of a prophecy in the Psalms. This prophecy shews the previous intention that Jesus should be so raised up. And here we read that He also was " delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." So that God surely foreknew and planned all things relating to our redemption through Christ ; both how He would have to die upon the cross, and how He would also arise from the dead. And thus God knows beforehand, also of us, all we do, and all we suffer ; plans for us how we might do and suffer for the best ; and ordains how, according to our use of the time which He gives us here, we shall in the end either perish or be for ever saved. Certain we are to come to one or other of these two ends. And fearful it is to think that we might by any possibility come to death eternal. What is it then that God has ordained concerning us ? " Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Whosoever shall in earnest pray, through faith in Christ, and persevere in prayer and faith unto the end, the same shall live for ever. Let us therefore receive God's promises as they are generally set forth to us in holy Scripture. And in our doings let us follow that will of God, which is expressly declared unto us in the word of God. (See XXXIX Articles.)

Peter's address concluded. The hearers pricked in their heart.

29 Men *and* brethren, ¶ let me freely speak unto you ' of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, ' and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, ' that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself The Lord said unto my Lord, sit

thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do ?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

¶ Or, *I may.*

¹ 1 Kings 2. 10.

² Ps. 132. 11.

³ Ps. 16. 10.

⁴ Ps. 110. 1.

§ 362. *What we who are baptized ought to do.*

St. Peter in this conclusion of his address, dwells chiefly on the resurrection of Christ, shewing that by this event we must interpret those words of David in the Psalms, which could by no means be applied to the son of Jesse. And the like remark he makes on what David had foretold of Christ's ascension. From whence he argues, that God had made the same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ. Now this argument of the apostle supposes it to be a fact well known to all his hearers that Jesus of Nazareth had truly risen from the grave, had truly ascended into heaven. And these things being notorious in Jerusalem at the time, and also specially testified on this occasion, St. Peter might justly argue, that since the things were prophesied of Christ, Jesus to whom they happened must be the Christ Himself.

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." The address of the apostle was convincing. Or rather, God's grace effectually moved their hearts to feel its weight. For without his grace, no such argument, however forcible to the mind, 'is able to bring conviction to the soul. His power must move us first. But in order to be so moved we must first pray for help. But it is He that must ever help us first to pray, must help in us that first faint longing in the heart, which is the ground of our first earnest prayers. To Him we owe it that we hear the preacher's voice, that we read the word written by inspiration of the Spirit. To Him we must look for grace to profit by these his ordinances of Christian edification. And yet how much depends on our using his grace aright, on our striving to the utmost of our ability to mark, learn, and inwardly digest !

"They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This is an inquiry well befitting those, who for the first time feel deeply the necessity of caring for the soul. This is a question which we should each of us do well frequently to put to ourselves, as we become more and more convinced that this same Jesus is "both Lord and Christ." "What shall we do?" How can we better employ the talent committed to our charge? How can we become more truly devout to God, more right and reverent in our apprehension of Him, and of his dealings towards ourselves? How among our fellow creatures can we do more good, and feel more love? How might we be able to give a better account of the time we have, when we shall have time no more? "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This answer applies exactly to the case of those who, when they asked the question, had never been baptized. But it is also full of information profitable to ourselves. "For," as St Peter added, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Called we have been by God's mercy to be Christians. Invited we are by his earnest appeal to save ourselves from an untoward generation. Already we have received the outward sign of baptism. Already we have also received the inward grace, the remission of our sins in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us live then as they who have been forgiven; as they who have received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the quickening of our understandings to know God's will, and of our hearts to love to do it. Let us live as though we did indeed truly love; as if with Christ we were risen from the death of sin, as if our hearts were ascended with Him into heaven; as if we were loving to be there with Him in thought, longing there to see Him as He is; glad to be dead to sin, and thankful to feel alive again unto righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Believers had all things in common.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had

all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread || from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

|| Or, at home.

§ 363. *How we ought to use our worldly goods.*

The Gospel was for its growth compared by our Saviour to a grain of mustard seed. See Matt. 13. 31. Here we read of three thousand souls added in one day to the infant church. Soon afterwards five thousand are said to have believed. Ch. 4. 4. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Ch. 19. 20. May we find it thus to grow in our own hearts by faith! May it be unto us daily more and more profitable, more and more precious! May it occupy daily more of our meditations, and daily more affect our lives! May our own growth in holiness and joy be a means of winning others to the faith! Many the many thousands who dwell around us in the land, and the many millions who exist in foreign parts, still utterly estranged from God, be rapidly brought home into his fold; the zeal of those who know his will being adorned by their devotion to his service, and helping under his grace to add daily to the church such as become heirs of salvation.

This addition of three thousand converts took place on the occasion of the gift of tongues, after St. Peter's discourse on that affecting miracle. "They that gladly received his word were baptized." This was the course for them who were already grown up to man's estate; first to hear gladly, and then to receive baptism. We have been already baptized; even before we were able to hear. Our life, through the care of Christian friends, has been from the very outset dedicated to Christ. And in proportion as we grow able to hear at all, it is our duty to hear gladly "the engrafted word, which is able to save" our souls. James 1. 21. How far otherwise is the case of those who regret that they are thus bound in covenant with Christ, to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil! How far from gladly do they hear that word, which so powerfully convinces them of sin! How hard is it for them to learn with joy the righteous judgment of God! And yet how often does God in his goodness make them glad to hear because eager to escape, glad to be told all their sins, because anxious to repent of all, glad to be instructed in all their duty, because fully purposed in all to obey!

But what an account of Christian duty is this, which is here given us in the case of the primitive disciples! How does it put to shame our worldly tempers, and our cold affections towards Christ our Lord! "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Instead of stedfast, how apt are we to be in all these things variable! In doctrine how prone are many to waver and go astray; in fellowship, to violate the unity of the Spirit! In the breaking of the bread of the holy communion how backward are nearly all to attend! In prayers how slow, how cold are all, how wandering in thought, how wayward in heart! And how sad is the effect of this our unsteadiness on those who behold it in our lives! How different from the surprise and awe which the early converts raised in all beholders, by the fervour of their zeal, the stedfastness of their devotion! "Fear came upon every soul." Every one who witnessed their method of living was astonished, was alarmed about his own condition; considering probably thus each within himself: surely these men live not thus for nought; there must some strange thing have happened in the world, to have moved them to such a life as this; and how can I possibly be safe, if I neglect the preaching of that Gospel, which has wrought so great a change in them?

And further they "had all things in common." They cared so little for this present world, that each gave up all he had for the common use of all. Each was content to share alike with the rest whatsoever had been his own property at the first. How far from such a spirit as this are they, who spend all their time in heaping up riches to themselves, and none in giving help to others! How far from it are they, who make money their chief delight; however much they have already, seeking always to get more, or however little, seeking always to have much! Let us feel on the contrary that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Chap. 20. 35. This must be our way to have all things in common; when we have the heart to give freely to the utmost of our power; when they who have much give largely, and they who have little receive thankfully; and when all either receive or give as they that must give account to Him, who is Owner and Lord of all.

Peter healeth a man that was lame.

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth hour.

2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

§ 364. *How we should reply to them that beg.*

It was at the hour of prayer that Peter and John went up together into the temple, when Peter wrought this great miracle on the man that had been lame from his birth. It was by asking an alms that the man drew their attention to his case. Let us be hence encouraged to ask in prayer of God. Let us rejoice, if whilst He thinks fit to withhold the things we ask for, He should give us others far better; even as health was to this poor man better than silver or than gold. "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Let us watch that in our prayers we seek not for gold or silver; that we press not for any earthly advantages at all. Or if we ask for any, as for health or friends, let it be always with resignation to God's will, and with the sense of how much better He must know what it is best for us to have.

But if we ask with faith for spiritual blessings, we cannot then ask amiss. We cannot then ask and receive not. See James 4. 3. We are sure in the end to receive what we require, as this man was to have his health restored. As the apostle "took him by the right hand, and lifted him up," so will God raise up us when fallen. As this man's "feet and ankle bones received strength," so shall we by God's help become strong to do those goodly works for which we now feel all too weak. As "he leaping up stood, and walked," so shall we, however low our estate in sin, however feeble our faith or hope or charity, yet be able both to rise in holiness of life, and to make progress in the path of God's commandments. And as he "entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God," so will it be our delight, as we gain more of grace by prayer, to enter into the house of God, there to hear his word, there to worship his holy name.

And would that now, whilst we reflect upon how much we might obtain by making known our requests to God, would that now we might also feel how urgent is our duty to comply with requests made to us by each other! Ill it becomes a Christian to reply with rude refusal to the most importunate demands of the most abject beggar. There may be much, in such a case, to lead us to suppose, that the party is not actually in want. There may be eases more urgent which we know of, already more than we are able to relieve, and where we know the want to be both great and real. Otherwise we are bound either to inquire into the case of our petitioner, or to suppose it true till we know it to be false. And where we suppose the distress to be real, we are bound, if in our power, to help in relieving it. And if we have neither gold nor silver left, which we could justly apply to such a purpose, we may learn from what these apostles did, to give at least a reply of courtesy, a word of friendly exhortation, and a prayer for help from God. Money I have none that I can give, we might say, if we can so say with truth; but I assure you of kind concern, I advise you how to seek for help elsewhere, and I pray God that He may help you to that food which never fails, to that treasure which is eternal in the heavens.

"And all the people saw him walking and praising God." This was the chief use of the miracle at the time. It was to turn the attention of the people to the powers which Peter exercised by the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was to fill them with wonder and amazement, that they might be anxious to inquire into what had happened, and so be filled in the end with faith and love. And this is also one chief use of our improvement in the grace of a holy life; it moves the hearts of others to observe and imitate. But more, it also elevates and purifies our own. It raises us to a higher and better state of being. It makes us altogether different from such as know not God, in all the things we have to do on earth, and in the end which we expect at death. Without the grace which prayer brings down from heaven, we are at once helpless and hopeless. With it we are able to hope all things, we are able to do all things. We walk with joy through life, and lie down to die in the firm persuasion that our death is to live for ever. We live as if we felt ourselves in God's presence. We die to find ourselves in the enjoyment of his glory.

St. Peter exhorteth the Jews to repentance.

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as *did* also your rulers.

18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing

shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

¹ Matt. 27. 20.

|| Or, *Author*.

² Deut. 18. 15. ch. 7. 37.

³ Gen. 12. 3.

§ 365. *The blessing of being turned from iniquity.*

It is not easy to excite attention without being tempted to covet admiration. But St. Peter, after working a remarkable miracle, forbids the people to fix their thoughts on him and his companion St. John, but would have them rather connect what they had seen with what he had to tell them of Jesus Christ. Thus he informed his hearers of the truth; what had really taken place, and by what means. And next observe how charitably he supposes of the Jews, that in ignorance they had done the dreadful thing, to deny "the Holy One and the Just." "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." Brethren he might well call them in this matter; for he also had denied his Lord. And whilst he thus allowed for ignorance in them, he probably meant to own against himself how he had committed the very same offence. And for their further consolation he assured them, that God out of all this evil had been able to draw forth good, having taken care that hereby should be fulfilled the things which He had spoken by his holy prophets. For though this ought not to make them less sensible of their sinfulness, it might help to confirm their faith in the efficacy of those sufferings of Christ, whereby alone sin can be forgiven; and whereby there may be forgiven even the worst of sins.

And thus he connects with their past sin their new hope of mercy: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." This is the exhortation of St. Peter to those who like himself had denied their Lord. This is the voice of mercy, which in the Gospel ever sounds unto the worst of sinners: "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." There is always much for all of us to repent of. We have all many sins that need to be blotted out. To all of us must come the time when Christ, who is now preached as a Saviour, shall return to us in the office of a Judge. God grant that it may be to us a time of refreshing, of comfort coming to ourselves from the presence of the Lord! God grant that we may in the mean while listen to prophets and apostles, both urging us to repent! God grant that above all we may listen to his Son!

Here we read of one most important end for which the Son was sent into the world; to bless us in turning away every one of us from our iniquities. Here we learn that it is a real blessing, not a hardship, not an evil, but a benefit, a matter of joy and thankfulness, to be so turned away from sin by the teaching of the Son of God. Let us then be glad that our sins are shewn us in the Gospel to be so exceeding sinful. Let us not wish to live in them any longer if we might. Let us rejoice that we may now escape their bondage, that there is now given to us, through faith and prayer, grace sufficient for the victory.

Blessed be God, that He thus has blessed us! Blessed be God that He has shewn us from what we ought to turn, and what we ought to turn to; pointing out on the one hand the sinfulness of sin, and on the other the excellence of holiness! Blessed be God that, besides shewing us the way, He has given us all help in turning, and promised us also, when we are turned, all further help to walk in newness of life!

Peter and John are cast into prison.

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

|| Or, ruler.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

¹ Ps. 118. 22. Matt. 21. 42.

§ 366. *That we can be saved only through Christ.*

The priests and Sadducees and captain of the temple were grieved that the apostles should teach the people, and preach through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. That which we do not ourselves believe with joy, we can scarce wish that others should have preached to them. We can scarce help grieving at the sound of glad tidings being heard, if we feel that we have no share in the gladness promised. Even the resurrection from the dead, all fearful as death is itself, all delightful as is the thought of life eternal, even the resurrection from the dead must be matter of mingled grief to those, who for their unbelief and disobedience expect only "the resurrection of damnation." John 5. 29. Never may we thus view with sorrow, what God has revealed for our joy! Never may we thus grudge to let others hear, what it should be our hearts' delight to hear ourselves!

To be put in hold, to be cast into prison, was, we see, all that the first preachers of the Gospel gained in this present world. And this is one good reason for believing them, when they preach through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. For they supported this doctrine by bearing witness to the fact that Christ had risen from the grave. And as in the fact they could not be deceived, so we may be sure that they were not deceivers, because all that they could gain was to be cast into bonds, or to be sentenced, as many were, to death. The resurrection from the dead is therefore certain. It is sure to take place; whether we wish for it or not. Christ has risen, and we must rise. We must rise, and stand before his judgment seat. For thus has He declared of Himself: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. 1. 18.

"On the morrow" the apostles were examined by the rulers. They spent therefore the whole night in the prison house; by which means it was perhaps thought that they would be daunted, and so more easily be persuaded to preach Christ no more. For certainly if they had any doubt themselves about the truth of what they had to preach, they were less likely to be positive "on the morrow," after lying all night "in hold." But on the morrow when they are inquired of, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" they plainly and courageously declare "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." "This," adds St. Peter, "this is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." That is to say, in Jesus Christ was fulfilled this prophecy of David, in Him, and in his being rejected by the Jews. "Neither is there salvation," he concludes, "in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Here is a truth of most deep importance, set down in words of most plain application. Only by Christ can we be saved; only through the atonement of his blood, only by our faith in his name, that is to say, in Himself. None other name is given unto man. No other name, or thing, or being is there, in the whole compass of every thing that is, no other in which we may safely trust; not in our own works, not in our own faith, not in our own prayers, not in all the prayers, and all the faith, and all the works of all that ever prayed, believed, and wrought; but only in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, in Him and in his dying for us on the cross. Through Him we may be saved; delivered from wrath, delivered from sin; made safe from sinning for the present, safe from condemnation in the end.

May God give us a saving faith in the merits of his Son our Lord! May God make us not ashamed of our Saviour's cross; not grieved at the thought of his being also our Judge! When we are tied with the chain of our sins, may God by his great mercy loose us; and when we are put in hold in the prison house of the grave, may He set us free for ever; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Peter and John threatened by the rulers.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth

to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

§ 367. *Christian confidence.*

The rulers of the Jews marvelled at the boldness of St. Peter and St. John, because they "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men." It was evident from their speech and manner that they had no advantages of human learning, no subtilty of worldly wisdom. This would indeed have made their courage past belief, if it were not that they had support from Heaven. And how but by such support can we account for the fact that they were not only bold, but also successful? How can we account for this whole history of the Acts of the Apostles, of their preaching and prevailing against all kinds of opposition, except by the working of Almighty God? What they did was his doing, not theirs. His blessing it was that made their preaching prosper; his power that healed by their hands the sick.

The success of their apostleship in the conversion of the world may be to us at present the more striking of these two kinds of evidence. The miracles to those who witnessed them must have yielded proof still more forcible. And this we are told was the case with the rulers: "beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." And why should they have wished to deny it? Why would any of mankind now prefer to prove, if possible, that the Gospel is not from God? Because the Gospel condemns things which they love to do. Because it orders them to do what they had rather not. Because it constrains them to feel, what they are reluctant to admit, that they are in point of knowledge but little children, in point of goodness only abject sinners, in the sight of Almighty God. And so also the Jewish rulers had evil motives in their hearts, for refusing to believe, even when at the time they owned to each other, that a notable miracle had been done. And they refused to receive, for their own eternal benefit, that counsel of God for their salvation, of which they felt the proof to be so strong, that they feared it would spread abroad largely amongst the people.

The rulers feared, because they felt that they were wrong. They feared, because of the miracle. They feared, because of the people. They feared, because the miracle was so evident and so strange, as to be likely to weigh greatly with all who heard of it. And accordingly they determined to threaten, what all the while they had no intention to perform. They hoped to influence the apostles, by the same feeling of alarm, which they felt to be so powerful in themselves. Thus to threaten is the common policy of worldly wisdom, and it springs from two of the worst of failings, deceit and cowardice. Let us therefore make it our unalterable rule of practice, never in any way, or at any time, to threaten any thing, which we do not at the time of threatening intend to do. Whether it be with children or with men that we are concerned, let us be assured that such plain dealing is both best for them, and best also for ourselves in the end. That which it is not well to do, it can never be well to threaten. That which we do not really mean, it must be always sin to say.

Whilst the rulers are afraid, the apostles are all courage. They reply in sincerity, as in God's presence, that they could not help bearing testimony to what they had seen and heard; and they put it to the rulers to decide whether they ought not to obey God rather than men. These are the true sources of holy confidence, a resolution to act according to God's will, and a conviction, after due pains taken to inquire, that we are in reality so acting. For what need we fear speaking, when we are persuaded that we speak the truth? Nay, how can we help speaking it, if it be a truth which we are commanded to profess? And what need we fear doing, when we believe that we are doing the will of God? Nay, how can we help doing it, what power shall hinder us, what threats deter, if it be both plainly God's will that we should do it, and also plainly his promise that in doing it we shall enjoy his help, and attain unto the inheritance of his glory?

The prayer and conduct of the disciples.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, ¹ Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name

of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold.

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

¹ Ps. 2. 1.

§ 368. *The fruits of the Spirit.*

In the imprisonment of the two apostles there had been fulfilled that which Jesus had forewarned them of, the being brought before rulers for his name's sake. See Luke 21. 12. On their deliverance "they went to their own company." And in the voice of praise, which all then uttered with one accord, they observed how thus there was fulfilled another and more ancient prophecy, which God had spoken by the mouth of his servant David. For herein it was seen how utterly in vain the rulers had set themselves against Christ, in the persons of his ministers. And herein it was made manifest, that however perversely men may exercise the will given them by God, they cannot go beyond, or overturn, what He for our good has counselled, and what He will constrain even the most unwilling of us all, to help to bring to pass. How suitable at such a moment was the prayer which followed! how fit to compose their troubled thoughts, and to secure both for themselves and for their brethren the help they would now so greatly need! How profitable it is to us, as an example, to teach us how we ought in all our need to pray to God, and in all our deliverances to give Him thanks!

Thus therefore let us apply unto ourselves the two chief things which followed on this prayer of the disciples, and on their being filled with the Holy Ghost. First it is said, "they spake the word of God with boldness." Then it is added, they "were of one heart and one soul," and "they had all things common." And these things are thus repeated, first, that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus;" and secondly, that the "possessors of lands or houses sold them," for distribution of the price amongst the rest. And to make this matter, strange as it must seem, more certain, there is added the name, the office, and the country, of one disciple who thus sold his land, and who was afterwards well known as the companion of St. Paul. Let us then seek for these proofs of our being filled with the Spirit. Let us speak the word with boldness. Let us never be afraid to own our convictions of the truth. Let us be glad of an opportunity to testify with all meekness, but at the same time with all courage, to testify the things which we believe, before those who are in error or in doubt. And secondly, let us labour after unity; let us strive to be of one heart and of one soul. Let us prove our affection for each other, by the readiness with which we give up of what is ours, for the use of those who are in greater need. Nothing is more helpful to us, if we would have weight in bearing testimony to our Lord, than to sit loose to the world and to such possessions as we have in it. "The love of money," St. Paul tells us, "is the root of all evil." 1 Tim 6. 10. And in this practice of the primitive disciples, that they had all things in common, we see how thoroughly they laid the axe to the root of the tree. See Matt. 3. 10. Though we sell not all we have, let us use it, spend it, give it, as if it were not ours, but lent unto us by God for his service; not for the gratifying of our own vanity or sense, but for the honouring of his name by the benefiting of each other. Oh may God, who has given us all we have, incline us thus to give all to Him! Oh may we never either acquire or possess, never either spend or give, what we cannot lay as at the apostles' feet, an offering of devotion to our Lord!

Ananias and Sapphira fall down dead.

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart || to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and

carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found *her* dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

|| Or, to deceive.

§ 369. *The sin of lying to the Holy Ghost.*

It is grievous to see how on this occasion the husband and wife agreed together in offence, each encouraging the other in what each knew to be a sin, and both yielding up their souls to the snares of Satan. To Ananias the apostle thus puts the charge: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Of Sapphira he enquires; "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" To have the heart filled by Satan, to be taken captive by our evil enemy at his will, this is, we see, no excuse for sin, this hinders not the certainty and severity of punishment. And to have agreed together in iniquity, to have, in what we do amiss, the countenance of those, whose wishes might justly influence our own, this does but add to each one's own offence a share in the sinfulness of the other.

Great was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira in attempting to deceive the apostles, and in them to deceive also the Holy Ghost; especially when they had witnessed, as they must have done in many instances, the mighty works of the Spirit. Great also was their sin in wishing to deceive at all, in aiming to be thought devout by the gift of their possessions, whilst they retained for themselves a part of the price. It was their own to sell or not, as they thought fit. But they could never have been at liberty to pretend to sell it for God's honour and for the common stock, whilst they enjoyed for their own exclusive use a portion of the produce. There are many things which beforehand we are free to choose either way, to sell or not to sell, to give or not to give, to do or not to do. And yet when we have pledged ourselves to do them, we are then no longer free to retract our pledge; least of all if it be a case where we stand pledged to God, if it be a sacrifice we have promised to his honour, a sum which we have devoted to doing good for his sake.

Nor are we indeed altogether free to do exactly what we will with what we call our own. Nor does St. Peter here mean to say that we are so. Ananias and Sapphira could indeed have refused to sell their possession. But such a refusal, at a time when Christians had all things in common, see Acts 4. 32, would have argued in them a sinful love of this present world, a sinful distrust of the promises of Christ, a sinful indifference to the wants of their suffering fellow converts. We are not at liberty not to give largely. We cannot without sin neglect to do all the good that lies in our power. We cannot without lack of faith and charity, refuse to spend, and sell, and give, whatsoever may be better given, or sold, or spent more suitably for God's honour and for our own salvation, than if it were kept by us for our own possession.

Have we not promised to renounce the world? Are we not bound by the same strict obligations as Ananias and Sapphira? And what do we but lie unto the Holy Ghost, if we keep back of the price, which we are bound, most solemnly bound, to dedicate to Almighty God, even our hearts, and all that here we love, which we must count as nothing for the sake of Jesus Christ? Let us therefore ever be aware, that to be worldly minded instead of heavenly minded, this is for us, who are bound otherwise, to lie to the Holy Ghost. Let us be aware that to lie to the Holy Ghost is no less than to lie unto God. The Lord of life and death, He who upholds our existence here, and who could in one moment turn us to the dust from which we were taken, He it is whom we are bound by the most solemn of all engagements to love with all our hearts. Let us be ready then, for his sake, like the widow at the treasury, to part with even all that we have. See Luke 21. 2. And whilst He yet allows us to use it as his stewards, let us both watch and strive, that in all we have and in all we do with it, we use it according to his will.

The apostles, being imprisoned, are delivered by an angel.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.)

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the || sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

|| Or, in every street.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with * indignation,

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

* Or, envy

§ 370. *God knoweth how to deliver us from sin.*

Here we read of the respect in which the first Christians were held by the people of the Jews, chiefly owing to the miracles which the apostles wrought, and to the agreement which prevailed throughout the church. "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them." Highly as Christians were esteemed, no one pretended to be a Christian who was not. Such was the fear that had fallen upon all, after the death of Ananias and Sapphira! Such was the manifest judgment of Almighty God on falsehood and hypocrisy! Such was the holiness of the genuine believers! Such was also their risk of danger from the rulers, that no one ventured outwardly to join their company who was not inwardly devoted to their cause.

"And believers were the more added to the Lord." This entire separation of the church from the world, with this entire unity of the church within itself, prevailed upon many to adopt the Christian faith. Whilst the signs and wonders, which the apostles wrought, drew together a great multitude from the cities round about; who by the healing of their manifold infirmities were likely to be won over to the truth. Let us be assured that as the hands of the apostles had power to heal the sick, so might we also be certainly healed of our sins, and so certainly would our influence, as we are members of the church of Christ, help greatly to add believers unto the Lord; if only we would attend carefully to these two points, to agree more cordially with each other, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the contagion of the world. Thus might virtue go forth from the whole unto the sick; and the shadow of them that have faith and love, might overshadow for their eternal good, the hearts of such as know not God.

The success of the apostles provoked the indignation of the high priest, and of all them that were with him. And by way of stopping the progress of the Gospel, they resolved to try the effect of force. They "laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." This was a step further than the last attempt to silence them, which ended in idle threats. And now surely, thought these evil rulers, now that we have taken these decisive measures, Peter and his companions are completely silenced. The walls of the prison are between them and the people. They can preach no more in the name of Jesus. They can no longer heal the sick, cast out the unclean spirits, or draw the people to a new faith and practice. "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

This was an errand too important for God to let it long be hindered by the malice of foolish men. Prison walls, and doors, and locks, and bars, what are these against the purposes of Him, who made the world and all that is therein? It was his will that the Gospel should be preached, should be preached in the very place where its enemies were holding council to suppress it, preached by these very men whom they had cast into prison, and at this very time when they were thought to have been silenced. And whilst the high priest and council were sending to fetch them to be arraigned, or rather before they sent, "early in the morning," the prisoners, having been thus set free by God, were speaking and teaching the words of life. How profitably might this rescue of the prisoners remind us, that God knows how to deliver from captivity the soul that is in the bondage of iniquity! How strongly should it encourage us to hope that, whether our duty be to preach or hear, He will secure to us the means of making known to others, or of knowing for our own peace and joy, the words of Gospel truth!

Lord, may thy Gospel be to us the word of life! May it make us now to live in holiness and love! May it fit us for, and bring us to, a life of endless glory in the world which is to come!

The apostles answer before the council.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when he had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, 'Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

¹ Ch. 4. 18.

§ 371. *That we must obey God rather than men.*

It appears from this history that when "the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors," it was done so as not to disturb the keepers who stood watching. The persons of the prisoners were removed in such a manner, as could be neither seen nor heard by mortal senses. This may seem in some respects more strange than what happened to Paul and Silas at Philippi, see Acts 16. 25, where the foundations of the prison house were shaken and the keeper of the prison was awakened out of sleep. But in either case the same convictions are forced upon our minds, that what we call the settled order of nature, is settled only for times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power; and that when He pleases He can make the things that are, as though they were not, can either set free the prisoners without opening the doors, or open the doors so that none shall see, or manifestly burst them open to the dismay of the beholders.

A miracle so well calculated to fill our minds with confidence, served only to raise doubt in the chief priests and rulers. "They doubted of them whereunto this would grow." To doubt is somewhat short of disbelieving. And yet these rulers, we see, acted as unbelievers. For doubt, unless it be soon settled by diligent inquiry, by faithful and laborious searching after truth, is seldom far removed from unbelief. How indeed can we expect that it should be otherwise? If the Gospel be the word of God, how can we help fearing for those who doubt it, for those who doubt without seeking for the truth, that He who alone could save them from this fall, will soon give them over to a reprobate mind?

That the mind of the rulers was still bent on evil is evident from the question which they put to the apostles, asking them, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?" To which Peter and the others answered by asserting what before they had only asked as a question: "We ought to obey God rather than men." God had raised up Jesus. Of this they had been witnesses. Of this they were also bound to bear their testimony. For Him had "God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour." And besides they had the Holy Ghost bearing witness with them by his gifts. And therefore they could say with confidence that in bearing this witness they were obeying God. For what could it be but God within their hearts, and God reigning in the world around them, who at once gave them a confident persuasion that they could heal the sick, and also at the same time make the sick whole of their diseases; at once made them try to speak in tongues unknown before, and enabled them to utter what they tried; at once made them wish to lead a life before unheard of, and gave them the grace to walk by faith in love?

This same rule of obeying God rather than men we ought also to put in practice ourselves, if ever we should be called upon by men to do that which seems to us to be by God forbidden. For what can be more manifest apostacy from our bounden duty and service to our Lord, than wilfully in any single thing to please each other, at the expense of displeasing Him? Only here we ought to take pains to know what God's will really is; lest we disoblige those whom we are bound to love, without really obeying God. And especially if our rulers are concerned, if it is some command of theirs which we are in doubt about, then we should very carefully consider, how plainly it is the will of God, that we should obey them who bear rule over us. To violate this duty on the false pretence of scruple in our conscience towards God, this would be hypocrisy. To be disobedient to our rulers in a case as clear as this of the apostles, this would be devotion to our Lord. Let us study to obey man out of a sense of duty, out of our love to God through Christ; and we shall then have little difficulty in determining, when, out of the same duty and the same love, we must resolve to refuse obedience to each other.

God make us willing to be subject one to another, because desirous to be subject unto Him!

The counsel of Gamaliel.

33 When they heard *that*; they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space :

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody ; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all, as many as || obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people

after him : he also perished : and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought :

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed : and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

|| Or, *believed*.

§ 372. *The sinfulness of fighting against God.*

The chief priests were cut to the heart by the faithful preaching of the apostles ; and immediately consulted together to put them to death. In this however they were hindered by the weighty and reasonable advice of Gamaliel. And they were content therefore with having the apostles beaten, that is to say, scourged by the common executioner. At this, we are told, the sufferers rejoiced. Both the pain and shame to them were matter of joy. For so they well knew that Christ their Lord had suffered before He entered into his glory. And so they were glad to suffer with Him, in the assurance that they should be also glorified together. See Rom. 8. 17. And so ought we also to be glad, when God sees fit to lay on us any sickness, sorrow, or suffering, even though it be attended by public shame ; if not brought on us by means of any fault of ours. And by thus feeling, and thus behaving, by being glad to suffer when it is God's will, and suffering as they that are really glad, meekly, cheerfully, and thankfully, we both get forward in our way to heaven, and we also help forward those who witness our behaviour. We help forward in our measure, according to the trial to which God has called us, the consummation of that blessed time, when the work of God shall prevail throughout the world, and men shall see it and believe.

For to what human means do we so greatly owe the success which the Gospel has had hitherto, as to the patient endurance of wrong by those in all ages who have maintained the truth ? What truly godly doctrine has not at some time drawn down on its professors the enmity of those amongst whom they lived ? What sufferings have equalled those which have been borne with patience in defence of a true confession ? And what can more plainly prove that the Gospel was of God, than its thus prevailing, by the fortitude in suffering which it wrought in those who suffered for Christ's sake ? That it was not the counsel or the work of man is made evident, not so much by its success, as by the method by which it has succeeded. Not by the weapons of worldly warfare, not by the indulgence of worldly appetites, not by a compromise with any single evil propensity, has the Gospel won its way amongst mankind. But in spite of being most unwelcome to our pride and passions, in spite of being most inconsistent with the use of any force or violence, persecution or compulsion, it has prevailed against infidelity and idolatry, in the most understanding nations of the earth. With Gamaliel then we conclude, that as the impostors who arose in former times came to nothing, so would this religion of Christ have vanished, unless it had been indeed of God. With Gamaliel we would argue, that to oppose the Gospel, to oppose what the Gospel teaches, to oppose it knowingly, wilfully, to oppose it with our lips or with our lives, this is no less than fighting against God.

What a fearful thought is this ; that with the will which God has graciously given us we should ever dare to disobey his commands ; that with the strength to choose and act, which He has bestowed, we should ever presume to fight as against Him ! What can be more pitiable than the condition of that man, who thus opposes the Maker of the universe ? What can be more clear than that we thus oppose Him, not only when we doubt his word, but when we disobey his will ? To murmur under his chastisements, is not this to fight against God ? To abuse his blessings, is not this to fight against God ? To refuse the self-denial He requires, to fix on earth the affections which He has told us to set on things above, see Col. 3. 2, to revel in enjoyments by Him forbidden, to be devoted to pursuits by Him denounced, to repine in disappointment by Him allotted, nay, not to be thankful in the worst of sorrows which He can possibly send us for our good, what is this but to fight against God ?

May He, who loved us when we were sinners, now dispose our hearts to be at peace with Him ! May He help us to suffer shame for his name even with joy ! May He strengthen us that we cease not, with our lips and by our lives, both to profess and to preach to others the Gospel of our Lord !

Seven men appointed to the daily ministration.

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer,

and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

§ 373. *How we ought to do good and to distribute.*

How hard it seems for many to be of one mind! No sooner was the number of the disciples multiplied, than there arose this murmuring of the disciples amongst each other. As if the enemy of souls, in envy of this increase in the multitude of Christians, took occasion by their being multiplied to sow the seeds of discord. Let us be watchful, whilst we labour to make converts to the faith, that we preserve ever the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let us take pains, that as the multitude of disciples is increased, there be made no opening for increase of dissension with each other. And especially let us be upon our guard against that love of money, which led to the murmuring here mentioned, and which is elsewhere said to be "the root of all evil." 1 Tim. 6. 10. For this jealousy between those converts who were inhabitants of Judæa, and those who came from the cities of the Greeks, related to the distribution of the common fund, amongst the widows of each separate nation. As if the apostles, who had counted all things but loss for Christ's sake, were likely to be unjust in the allotment of the property committed to their care. As if any partiality which they could possibly have shewn would have justified this murmuring of the brethren against each other.

From the behaviour of the apostles we may learn to do good at all risk of unjust suspicion; and also, when such suspicion shall arise, when such murmurs are uttered against us, then to take all reasonable steps to satisfy the murmurers. As long as no one murmured, they submitted to the labour of distributing the common fund. But now that the office raised a jealousy among the flock, they desired the brethren to look out among themselves seven men whom they might appoint over the business. These have been thought to have been ordained also to a spiritual office, such as is held by deacons in our church. For though the apostles had no longer time for serving tables, for distributing the sustenance of the body, it was highly fitting that this business should be duly overlooked, by those who were also qualified to be ministers of religion. And that these seven were thus appointed, at once to distribute alms and to preach the Gospel, is further made probable by the manner of their appointment, by prayer and the laying on of hands.

This distinction between the work which was most fit for the apostles, and that which became any other of the disciples, may be applied also to the difference between Christians in general, and those of us who are set apart for the ministry of the word. To preach the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, to be devoted to this work of preaching and of prayer, certainly this must be the most powerful of all means of doing good, within the reach of any Christian man. But those who are not duly called to so excellent an office, must not be above the task of discharging duties, which are here called serving tables. To do good in the temporal necessities of their brethren is an employment most worthy of their thoughts and time. To give food unto the hungry, clothing to the naked, and to visit them that are sick or in prison, this is a business fit for the disciples of Him, who went about doing good. Nor, if it be duly done, can it fail to help very greatly in spreading abroad also the knowledge and the faith of Christ. For what can more fix the attention of the beholder than a life devoted to such labours of love? What can more soften the hearts of those who share such acts of kindness? To do good then, and to distribute, let us not forget. Let us make it one chief head of our expenses. Let us make it one chief employment of our time. Let us be careful so to give as that none may murmur. Or if any murmur, let us remove, if possible, the grounds of murmuring. Let us give, not for our own pleasure, but for the good of those whom we relieve; and not for their good only, but for God's honour, and in order that Christ may be glorified. Let us give so as to win others to the faith, by shewing that true Christian faith makes us fervent in our zeal, and hearty in our charity, patient in well doing, though suspected of doing ill; and however much we love the good, yet kind also to the unthankful and to the evil.

Stephen doeth great wonders, is accused of blasphemy.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the || customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

|| Or, rites.

§ 374. *The glory that shall be revealed.*

Stephen was one of seven men selected by the brethren, and appointed by the apostles, for the ministration of the fund common to the early converts. And here we are told that he "was full of faith and power," and "did great wonders and miracles among the people." And the whole chapter following is taken up with an account of his address to the Jews, and of their violence in putting him to death. This may serve for an instance of the piety, and zeal which were manifested by the primitive Christians, and of the temper with which they were persecuted. For Stephen, though the first martyr, was but one out of many thousands. And we ought always to remember that this book is not a full history of the acts of the apostles, or of the Christian church, but only a short account of a few chief events, such as might best give us a just notion of the whole.

We are to conceive it then to have been at this time daily happening, amongst a people well advanced in ordinary knowledge, that great wonders and miracles were wrought, that they who wrought the miracles preached an entirely new religion, that the various sects then existing disputed with the preachers of the new faith, that public attention was called to the subject, and that the objectors were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which the new preachers spake. This ought to have convinced them of the truth of what was spoken. But they were so much the more resolute to oppose. Such is the perversity of the will of man. Such is the obstinacy with which we are tempted to cling to false opinions, false doctrines, false excuses, before God; even when we know their falsehood. But let us, when we cannot gainsay the conclusions which Scripture forces upon our minds, let us meet them with no false pleas, with no suborned witnesses. Let us own ourselves overcome by the force of truth, and rejoice to be its subjects henceforth for ever.

The charge brought against Stephen was that he had spoken blasphemy against the temple and against the law. Probably he had been repeating what our Lord declared, of his visiting Jerusalem to destroy it. This might seem to his accusers to be blasphemy. Or they so represented it, in order to his greater injury. And therefore to meet this calumny, he was endued with great power from on high, so as not only to speak with irresistible force, but also to look with the majesty of an angel. This in him was an evident miracle. Let us rejoice to know, that if we speak faithfully the truth, for Christ's sake, we also, through his grace, shall be glorified. Already will the countenance express that peace which this world cannot give. And hereafter, in the realms of light and love, we shall receive the "crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. 5. 4.

What is exactly meant by such expressions we cannot indeed now explain. Nor can we more than feebly understand any one of the many figures, by which Scripture teaches us, that heaven includes all that we can here conceive, and more; all that we can here love, and more. And this is doubtless one use of these images, that they remind us how excellent that state must be where God now is, and where we hope ere long to dwell for ever. Whenever therefore we look on any thing which has beauty upon earth, when we listen to sounds of sweetness, or indulge in feelings of most pure delight, never let us forget that these things, however excellent, however great, are not worthy to be compared for one moment with the glory which shall be revealed in us. See Rom. 8. 18. That glory is set before us in the Gospel of our Lord as an object on which we might each day reflect, and which any day we might expect to reach. Strange that we should believe in its being so high, so great, so good, and yet so seldom think of it, so faintly long for it, so feebly labour to attain it. Let us endeavour by this reflection to kindle our desires for heaven from the flame of our earthly affections. And the more we love or admire any thing on earth, let us the more covet those heavenly joys, which, compared with this very thing, be it what it may, are beyond all question far, far better.

St. Stephen begins his defence.

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision:

¹ Gen. 12. 1.

² Gen. 17. 9.

³ Gen. 21. 3.

⁴ Gen. 25. 26.

⁵ Gen. 29. 31.

⁶ Gen. 37. 28.

⁷ Gen. 41. 37.

⁸ Gen. 42. 1.

⁹ Gen. 45. 4.

¹⁰ Gen. 46. 5.

¹¹ Gen. 49. 33.

and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

§ 375. *Of our sinfulness, and the mercy of our Saviour.*

Stephen had been accused of blasphemy against the law of Moses, and against the temple of Jerusalem. For the Jews counted that both Law and temple would endure as long as the world should last. And to imply that they would cease, that Jesus would destroy the temple, and substitute the Gospel for the Law, this seemed to the Jews no less than blasphemy against God. Stephen therefore, by way of defence, enters into a history of their fathers, even of those to whom the promise had been given. And it was evidently his intent to shew, first, that before there was either Law or temple, the patriarch had been in favour and in covenant with God; and secondly, how since the giving of the Law, the Jews had resisted their own lawgiver, persecuted their prophets, and failed in many things to profit by the ordinances, for which they professed so high a value.

And first, it is clear, that before the Law was revealed, God entered into covenant with Abraham; giving him both the promise of the land of Canaan, and also the ordinance of circumcision, for a sign of the covenant thus made. And in this covenant we have a lively representation of our state as Christians. For we also have a land of promise on which as yet we set not foot; which we wait for in hope, work for in fear and love, being for a while in bondage unto the flesh, subject to the temptations of the world and of the devil, and in jeopardy each day we live of losing our life eternal.

From the favour shewn to Abraham previously to the Law, Stephen next proceeds to dwell upon the like mercy vouchsafed to Joseph, and to his father Jacob. Joseph was sold into Egypt; "but God was with him." Affliction for the present is our way to joy for ever. We too are in bondage during this present life, but if only we believe, God is with us also. In the land of our captivity there is deliverance at hand. When famine reigns elsewhere there is corn in Egypt. No one suffered more than Jacob in the bereavement of his son. No one was more greatly comforted in having him restored. No portion of God's universe has perhaps fallen more deeply into sin than ours. We have sinned. But Christ has died. He has died for the saving of sinners. We have sinned, and are sentenced to death. But through Christ, blessed be his name, we have assurance of the resurrection from the dead. Like the brethren of Joseph, we have been at enmity with God. We have been estranged from Him who has condescended to be called "the firstborn amongst many brethren." Rom. 8. 24. But like Joseph, He desires to make Himself known unto us. Like Joseph, He provides for us abundance in our want, and sheds over us, in the anguish of our souls, the tears of love, and of compassion. Like Jacob, we die, and are buried with our fathers. But even in our graves we are not forgotten. Even there does our Saviour remember us for good, and undertake for us that we shall surely rise again. Our flesh must see corruption, but it shall also, through Him, see incorruption. It must be sown in weakness and in dishonour. But it shall be raised in glory and in power.

God grant that what here we suffer, either in life or death, may turn to our everlasting joy! God grant that whilst we live we may live unto the Lord, and that when we die we may in our death be buried with Christ, and rise again with Him to everlasting life!

St. Stephen's defence continued.

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 ¹In which time Moses was born, and ²was || exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 ³And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 ⁴And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didest the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

¹ Exod. 2. 2.

² Heb. 11. 23.

|| Or, fair to God.

³ Exod. 2. 11.

⁴ Exod. 2. 13.

§ 376. *Our unwillingness to be amended.*

St. Stephen in his defence before the council of the Jews, continues to dwell at length on the history of their fathers; by which means he secured their attention, pacified their anger, and prepared them the better to be convinced, if their hearts had been open to conviction. From this portion of the history we may derive many useful lessons for ourselves. Here we learn that God fulfils his promises in due season. However long we have to wait, when the times draw nigh, which He knows to be the best, we may be sure He will not forget. Here we may call to mind how ill it fared with the king which knew not Joseph, with the people, who requited by ill usage all the benefits which they owed to the children of Israel. And we may hence do well to consider, that there is no sin more sure to bring its punishment with itself, than unthankfulness either towards man, or towards God. Here we may note, how in the midst of the afflictions of the Hebrews, Moses was raised up to be their deliverer, and preserved by the very daughter of their oppressor. So easy is it for God to overrule the designs of the wicked for the benefit of his people, and to raise up the poor out of the dust to set him among princes. Brought up at the court of Pharaoh, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and deeds, Moses chose, and it is a choice which we should resolve to imitate, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. See Heb. 11. 25. "When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." It came into his heart. God put it there. It was not there by nature. It is only by the grace of the Holy Spirit that we can better like to do good to others, than to please ourselves. Let us be aware when any good thought arises in our hearts, let us be aware that it is God who put it there. Let us not dare to check it. Let us reverence it, follow it, be thankful for it, and pray that it may be maintained, renewed, strengthened, perfected.

Moses then, thus moved by God, desired both to redress their wrongs, and yet more to reconcile them amongst each other. But they would neither thank him for smiting the Egyptian their oppressor, nor yet for setting them at one in their mutual strife. How fit is their conduct on this occasion to remind us of our unthankfulness to our Saviour Christ! And how fit is this zeal of Moses to remind us of our Saviour's love to us! Has not Christ smitten our oppressors? Has not He vanquished sin and death? Has not He urged us above all things to love one another? In our mutual oppressions, quarrellings, and strife, does not his voice affectionately proclaim, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" And what thanks do we commonly give Him for these his good offices? Are we not often sorry that sin has been thus vanquished? Do we not almost wish that it were not so certain as it is, that we may, if we will, be free from sin? Are we not in our pride reluctant to be reconciled to those with whom we are at variance, apt to set at nought that Mediator, who has both made our peace with God, and would have us to be in all things at peace with each other? Is it not the feeling of our hearts, when conscience in vain reproves, when Scripture commands and we will not obey, when Christ and the Holy Ghost remonstrate in our souls against sin, and we resolutely continue sinners; is it not the answer of our hearts, though we say not the very words with our lips, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"

Well it is for us if Christ flee not at that saying, if the Holy Spirit, thus many times grieved, have not altogether ceased to move us for our good. May God grant that for the future we may listen more attentively to his words, more willingly follow his godly motions, and more faithfully fulfil his will! May Christ make us to be at peace with God, incline us like Himself, to visit our brethren in their affliction, to set at one them that are at variance, and to have peace one with another.

The defence of Stephen continued further.

30 ¹ And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 *Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel

which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had ² shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, ³ and in the wilderness forty years.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, *'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, || like unto me; him shall ye hear.*

38 ⁴ This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:*

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 ⁵ *Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

¹ Exod. 3. 2.

² Exod. 7. 9.

³ Exod. 16. 1.

⁴ Deut. 18. 15.

|| Or, as myself.

⁵ Exod. 19. 3.

⁶ Exod. 32. 1.

§ 377. *That Christ is not far off.*

We have here two points insisted on, which are of great importance in the defence of Stephen. The first is, that the very Moses whom the Jews refused, saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." Whence the Jews might do well to take warning, lest the same Jesus whom they rejected should be, as Stephen preached, no other than the Christ. Now the Jews gloried in the recollection of the deliverance which they had received by the hand of Moses. And they were ready, no doubt, to marvel at the blindness of their fathers in refusing one who proved afterwards so mighty a deliverer. Let us apply always to ourselves the astonishment we are apt to feel at the mistakes and perversity of others. Let us be surprised at our own ignorance, obstinacy, and pride. Let us to surprise add sorrow, and repentance, and amendment.

The second point of importance in the argument here urged by Stephen on the Jews is, that Moses, in whose law they trusted, had himself spoken of another prophet to arise, and bidden the Jews in due time hear him; so that Moses was himself a great witness in behalf of Christ. And the more the Jews believed in Moses, they ought to have believed the more in Jesus also. And this perhaps may account for the discredit which has been cast on the books of Moses, as well as on the other writings of the Old Testament, by those who disbelieve the Gospel. For us, it is sufficient, believing as we do that the Gospel is from God, it is sufficient to find in it the Scriptures of the Old Testament continually referred to as inspired by the Holy Ghost. Many things therein we may be unable to understand. Many we may be unable to account for. Many parts, by distance of time and country, may be now obscured to us, which to the Jews were once plain and profitable. But of this we cannot doubt in any case, that all was written by guidance from above; for it was of the Old Testament that St. Paul was writing, when he said what we may safely apply also to the New, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3. 16.

And this was the opinion universally received amongst the Jews. For though they rejected Moses at the first, they were afterwards induced to receive him by means of miracles. It was the burning bush, it was the rod which was made into a serpent, and wherewith Moses wrought signs and wonders, and drew down destruction on Pharaoh and his host; these were the things which convinced his brethren, that he was a messenger from the Most High, a prophet who truly spake the very will of the Almighty. And so it was also with Jesus Christ; He did that which man could not do, He spake as man never spake. See John 7. 46. He was like unto Moses in his mighty works, in his revealing God's will. He was greater than Moses, for He was not a servant but a son, the everlasting Son of the Father.

But now He is gone away from us for a time. And many, who if He were still on earth would be convinced by the majesty of his presence, are tempted, like the Jews of old, to say, "we wot not what is become of him." Surely He is not far off. He is nigh to hear our prayers, and to present them before his Father's throne. He is nigh to note our sins, and to intercede, if we repent, for our forgiveness. He is gone into heaven for a time, there to be our Ruler for the present, and thence to come back and to be our Judge. This is what is become of Him. He is gone, that in his absence the Comforter might come; that the Holy Spirit might make holy our hearts and souls. He is gone; but He will come again quickly. Suddenly as a thief in the night; as the lightning that shineth from one end of the heaven to the other; He will come openly, visibly, sensibly. Let us watch and pray; in order that now whilst He is absent we may obey Him as our Ruler, and then be not afraid to meet Him as our Judge.

The defence of St. Stephen draws to a close.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ¹ O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, ² that he should make it according to the fashion that

he had seen.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 ³ But Solomon built him an house.

48 Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

¹ Amos 5. 25.

² Exod. 25. 40.

³ 1 Chron. 17. 12.

⁴ Ch. 17. 24.

§ 378. *That we must be at enmity with the world.*

St. Stephen here concludes that part of his address, which consists of a review of the Jewish history. He dwells on the idolatry of which the Jews were guilty, as a proof of how little respect they had themselves unto their Lord. And he shews also, from God's own words in the prophecies, that the temple, of whose honour they were so jealous, was not holy in itself, but only by God's appointment, and therefore might very probably be by Him destroyed. And this distinction we may apply to many things which were of force under the elder covenant, as opposed to nearly all that is enjoined in the New Testament. The former were often matters of indifference in themselves, but might because they were appointed. The latter have been appointed, commanded, and revealed, because they are right for us to believe and do.

There is a close connexion between the two things here objected to the Jews, the worship of idols, and the superstitious reverence for temples. Both we know abounded and still abound amongst the heathen. Both probably were gradually introduced by practices meant at first for helps towards devotion. We set apart a place as sacred for the worship of God; this is reasonable and right. But to suppose that God so dwells there, as not to be present every where; this is superstition. To speak of blasphemy against the temple, which the Jews did here, was to speak of the temple as if it were in God's stead. And therefore they might need to be reminded, by the utter destruction of that sacred house, that heaven is God's throne and the earth his footstool. See Ps. 66. 1. And so should we also, whilst we cherish all due respect for the houses of Christian worship, continually be sensible that God is present every where, and continually be mindful of the time when all houses made with hands shall perish, and God shall be all in all. His hand hath made all these things, and can, in a moment, bring all to nothing. Out of church as well as in, his eye is near to see, his arm to help or to correct. Let us live as if it were his temple every where; let us in every thing give thanks; let us pray without ceasing.

In like manner idolatry may probably have arisen from an undue reverence, paid to things really worthy of our admiration and regard. Thus men began to worship the works of God instead of God Himself; and at length also they even worshipped the work of their own hands. Let us be thankful that we are altogether relieved from ignorance so gross, from sin so grievous, as that of idol worship. Let us be watchful that we never fall into that sin which is in Scripture pronounced to be most akin to it, the love of money. Covetousness is idolatry. See Col. 3. 5. And it is so because it is the setting up of mammon for our God. It is the bowing down before mammon and worshipping him. It is paying to mammon that honour and regard, which are due neither to money nor to rank; neither to relations nor friends however highly valuable, however thoroughly amiable, but only to our Father which is in heaven, only to our Lord and Saviour Christ. And here also, as in idolatry, let us carefully remember that it is impossible to serve at once both God and mammon. Men began with idols as helps towards devotion. Soon did they forget God and worship idols only. We may try for a time to love both God and mammon, but this attempt will soon end in loving the world only. Our diligence in business, our kindness to each other, our readiness to do what which is just and generous and true, these things, unless they spring from real affection towards God, are little less than an idolatrous attachment to this present world. To this world's happiness they are directed, and in it they have their sole reward. Let us then henceforth love God far the first, nay, if it be of the world we speak, let us love only God. Let us be no less than at enmity with the world. Let us remember that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. And let us be assured that enmity against the world, against the sin, the pomps, and vanities of the world, such enmity is absolutely necessary, in order for us to love God truly, or for us to be beloved by Him.

Grant Lord, that like Thee, whilst we hate the sin, we may have grace to love the sinner. Teach us to be at once at enmity with the world, and in charity with all them that dwell therein.

St. Stephen is stoned.

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God,

and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

§ 379. *How to forgive our enemies, and to worship Christ.*

"They stoned Stephen." He has the happiness of being the first of martyrs; the first who is recorded to have suffered death for the sake of the cross of Christ. A martyr means, a witness who lays down his life for his testimony; it means one whose life is taken by violence because he bears witness to the truth. Such a witness was Stephen, the first martyr that we read of to the truth of Christ Jesus. How fearlessly did he bear his testimony! How powerfully did he rebuke the unbelief of the Jews! How suddenly and forcibly did he sum up his short account of their history, with this application of the whole to themselves: "as your fathers did, so do ye!" They resisted the Holy Ghost; "so do ye!" They were stiffnecked; so are ye. They were uncircumcised in heart and ears; so are ye: "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." Rom. 2. 28. They persecuted the prophets, and slew them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One. Ye have been betrayers and murderers of the Just One Himself. Of you therefore, as Christ declared of this generation, shall be required the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world. See Luke 11. 50.

How unexpected must have been this reproof to Stephen's hearers! How little are we led to look for it by the calm tone of his previous address! Probably at this point of his defence he saw signs of impatience in the council; and therefore hastened, whilst he yet was spared, to apply to their own hearts the history of their fathers' sins. And probably the Holy Spirit, by which he spake, urged him thus to denounce their unbelief, thus to encounter their wrath and fury; that he might present to the Christian church for ever this animating history of true martyrdom. "They were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." Such was the effect of truth plainly spoken, but unwillingly received. If agony so great can now arise from sin brought home to the conscience here, what must be the feelings of the wicked and impenitent, in that place which is described as outer darkness, where "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Matt. 22. 13.

Whilst the Jews "gnashed on him with their teeth," Stephen "looked up stedfastly into heaven." Fury is in their hearts, in his is peace; in his are hope and joy. He "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." That light which cannot be approached, in which he was so soon to dwell, was now for a few moments by God's power forestalled. A few moments before death his soul was made sensible of that glory, which, on his dying, would otherwise have first burst upon his sight; of that glory, which on our death, will fill also our senses with delight, if only like Stephen we die in the Lord. Heaven opened, Christ standing at the right hand of God, a place of which no earthly beauty or magnificence can give us the most faint conception, beings to whose power and goodness no human excellence can approach; these were in one moment seen by Stephen. This is the vision to which death might in one moment bring us that now hear these words. Who then would not rather die with Stephen, than live with them that compassed his death? Who that lives the life of unbelief and sin, can fail to be numbered with the enemies of our Lord?

But if the martyr's death may not be ours, we at least may imitate the martyr's prayer. Let us learn how to forgive our enemies, by seeing how Stephen forgave his. Let us learn where he had learnt, from Christ our Lord. And whilst of each ill turn they do us we repeat, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," let us repeat also the prayer which Christ first used Himself, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23. 34. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." With such words as these let us lie down to that which is most like to death, our nightly rest. With such a thought as this, let us lie down when we can no longer speak, to sleep the sleep of death. And here also let us learn to say, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, my Ruler, Guide, and Judge; Jesus, my Saviour, the Deliverer of my soul; receive my spirit, take into thine own keeping, in this fearful hour, that in me which never dies. Take me, and deliver me from wrath. Take me and keep me, unto Thyself for ever.

Philip preaches Christ in Samaria. Simon is baptized.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came

out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

§ 380. *That we should rejoice, and give God the glory.*

Saul who is here mentioned as consenting to the death of Stephen, was the same who is afterwards called Paul. And it is profitable for us to be thus told beforehand what an active part he took in the persecution of the Christian church. For thus a door is opened to our faith and hope, however great our sins have been, however long we may have been bent on wickedness or vanity, a ground is given us to believe and hope, that we may, like Saul, be converted unto God. But whilst he yet was making havoc of the church, the faithful Christians "carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentations over him." They were not afraid to own him for their brother; they were not ashamed to weep over his death. The change to him was glorious. But to them the loss was great. We may be devout towards God; and yet lament the decease of friends on earth. We may deeply feel regret for their departure, though we believe that they are gone to a better world. The Gospel will not root out our feelings of affection for each other. But whilst it allows us to indulge them, bids us to restrain them within wholesome bounds. We must sorrow, but not as they that have no hope. We may lament, but not as murmuring against God. We may love our brethren; but as loving God still more. We may carry them to their grave with lamentation; but it must be also with thanksgiving and with cheerful hope.

From the violence of this first persecution it followed that the disciples, all except the apostles, were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria. Thus the preaching of the Gospel was extended. For "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Such is the common end of man's devices, when they are set up against the will of the Most High. Whilst we struggle and resist, God's work so much the more prospers. The more men persecute, Christ so much the more is preached. How clearly does this shew us the folly of attempting either to oppose the truth by violence, or even to propagate it by force! Let us remember therefore in our practice, if there be any one whom we wish to win from error, we must do it not by severity, but by kindness. We must shew that the truth which we maintain, works in ourselves a right Christian temper.

As one instance among many of what happened in this persecution of the Christians we read how successful Philip was in the city of Samaria. "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." "And there was great joy in that city." What a delightful testimony of the true fruit of the Gospel, effectually preached! What a just account of the state of feeling which it ought to work continually in our hearts! For a time it may make us sad. But on the whole it must help to make us joyful. For a time it may constrain us to mourn for sin. But in the end it will enable us to rejoice in our forgiveness. And not only with the people did Philip's preaching thus prevail, but also with one who himself had been looked up to as "the great power of God." This was Simon, who "in the same city used sorcery;" and who knew that he must lose his own influence in proportion as the Gospel of Christ should succeed. His conversion proved therefore the more plainly the force with which Philip preached, the truth and power of the miracles which Philip wrought. The miracles to which Simon had pretended were now really taking place. And he who had been used to make others wonder, now wondered himself, "beholding the miracles and signs which were done." Let us aim in all we do, not to be ourselves admired, but to give God all the glory. Let us prefer wondering at the marvels of his providence and grace, to being wondered at for our own proficiency. Let us exalt our Saviour, and abase ourselves. Let us acknowledge at once our own sinfulness, and the sufficiency of his atoning blood.

St. Peter reproveth Simon.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John :

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter : for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

§ 381. *The assurance of pardon, an encouragement to repent.*

Here we again remark that what is related to have happened in Samaria, must serve for an instance of what was done by the apostles in all other places on like occasion. They "heard that Samaria had received the word of God;" and they sent unto them Peter and John, to pray that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." This was an ordinance distinct from baptism, which it appears that none but the apostles might then administer. It was the outward sign and means whereby those who had already been baptized, were endued with the power of working miracles. For in those times the Holy Ghost enabled men to heal the sick, to speak with tongues which before they knew not, and to prophesy or declare abroad the will and work of God, under his infallible direction. And gifts of some such kind as this appear at that time to have been bestowed, by the laying on of hands, on some, if not on many, in every Christian community which any where was formed. Whereas now, when no such marvels are vouchsafed, the Holy Ghost being manifested in the holiness of life of them which believe, there is still practised in the church the like ordinance of laying on of hands, at the time of what we call confirmation.

It was in order to obtain power to work miracles, that Simon desired to purchase with money the gift of the Holy Ghost. This shews that, though he believed and was baptized, he was yet far from fit to be entrusted with these precious gifts; which were meant not for the worldly profit of the possessors, but for the spiritual advantage of the rest. And in order to point out to us how great was this mistake, St. Peter uses these words of strong reproof: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." Most hateful in God's sight must be the notion of purchasing with money any spiritual gift. Most hateful to a reflecting Christian should be the thought that any benefit can arise, as some have vainly held, from prayers or masses offered formally in our behalf by others, at a price of gold and silver. Most reluctant we always ought to be to bid money for the performance of any duty, or in any way to bow the knee to this idol of a wicked world. Most thankful we ought always to feel that the one thing which is to all most needful is always to be given, never to be sold; that the saving of the soul, that most precious of all objects we can desire, may be purchased without money and without price, alike by rich and poor, alike by the most upright of mankind and by those who have most grievously offended.

For here let us note the force of St. Peter's exhortation: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Even this request of Simon's was not such blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as cannot be forgiven. What sin therefore can we ever have committed, what sin can we have imagined in our hearts, for which we might not, if we were to repent and pray, obtain the forgiveness of our Father which is in heaven? And what a motive to our repentance, and to our prayers, is this! God will, through Christ, forgive our sins. God has for Christ's sake forgiven them. Let us pray for ourselves that his pardon may in us be realized. Let us implore the prayers of friends in our behalf. Let us believe what the apostles have declared, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5. 16. Let us feel sure of what Christ has taught us, that the faint utterance of humility and contrition from the heart of the most abandoned prodigal who now at length returns unto his father's house, will be met with unexpected love, and encouraged by undeserved forgiveness.

God teach us to pray for ourselves and for each other! God help us in our devotions to repent! God forgive us the works of our hands, the words of our lips, and the thoughts of our hearts! Many of them are evil, yea all of them. Only in God's mercy have we hope through Christ. Only if we repent, as Christ would have us, can we truly hope for mercy.

Philip baptizeth the Ethiopian.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, ¹ He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:

and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

¹ Isa. 53. 7.

§ 382. *That we should go on our way rejoicing.*

The temple at Jerusalem was noted for its grandeur in all the neighbouring nations. And the worship there celebrated was the means of conveying to many parts of the world some knowledge of the true Jehovah. And thus, from as far as Ethiopia, a country many hundreds of miles apart, it appears that this high officer of state thought fit to journey, for the sake of worshipping at Jerusalem. This may serve for a reproof to those amongst ourselves, who imagine that their business is too urgent to admit of their attending on religious ordinances. Who could less be spared from his post than the treasurer of a mighty queen? What proselyte of the Jews could more reasonably have pleaded that his office excused him from thus visiting the temple? Yet what Christian shall we find travelling a thousand miles, out of pure desire to do honour unto God?

This zealous proselyte came not to Jerusalem out of vain superstition; but took pains to learn the religion which he professed. For as he journeyed in his chariot, he was reading the Jewish Scriptures. And when Philip joined himself to his company, he was employed on that affecting passage of Isaiah, which thus describes the Saviour of mankind: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isa. 53. 7. This was a most appropriate text for the discourse of the Christian teacher. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus was He of whom the prophet spake. Jesus was He of whom all prophecy was written, for whose sake the Scriptures were revealed, the temple built, the sacrifices slain, the worship celebrated. All was in order to prepare mankind for the coming of the Christ. All was to prepare their minds for understanding, that by his stripes we are healed, by his death our sins are blotted out. This was the end of the whole Jewish institution. These were the doctrines Philip preached from this passage in Isaiah; faith in Jesus, obedience to his will, compliance with his ordinances, hope of the heaven promised by him.

And that this was the tenour of what Philip said, we may conclude from the anxiety of his hearer to be baptized. Philip must have spoken about baptism. And now when he was inquired of, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" he answers, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This is that profession of faith which is required of all who are baptized, and is made by others in behalf of those who are too young to answer for themselves. This profession has been made for us. And by this we are now bound ourselves. Let us take heed that we believe with all our hearts. Let us be glad that we have thus been bound to faith and to obedience. Let us go on our way rejoicing. This the eunuch did, when Philip was taken from him. This we must be prepared to do if we should lose any help to edification, which for the present we enjoy. We have still access unto grace through Jesus Christ. We have still hope of redemption through his blood. We have still a life of love to lead, and a crown of glory to enjoy. Let us be thankful for any circumstances which have helped to draw us nearer unto God. But if the help is no longer continued, let us be thankful to think that we can do without it. The minister of the Gospel may be removed from us, or we may remove from him. But the Gospel, and Christ, and God, these are ever with us, for these are every where.

Saul journeying to Damascus is stricken to the earth.

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the

Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

§ 383. *How we may know what God would have us do.*

On the conversion of St. Paul we would first observe, that it is an instance of God's right, and power, and determination, to raise up, for great and holy purposes, whatever instruments He thinks most fit. No one could seem beforehand more unlikely to be selected for an apostle to the Gentiles, than this great persecutor of the church. But here we see how easily all such difficulties are overcome, where the will of the Almighty is concerned. The fury of the persecutor is converted into the zeal of the apostle. Oh that God might thus turn our selfish pride into a lively regard for his honour; our wrath towards each other into enmity against sin; our covetousness and love of this present world into an earnest desire for the treasures of eternity!

Saul was on his journey towards Damascus, "breathing out threatenings against the disciples of the Lord." His thoughts were dwelling on the havoc he should soon make in the church of Christ. How sad it is to think that any one should have pleasure in persecuting his brethren, for conscience' sake; but how pleasing to remember that in this instance, as in many others of like nature, St. Paul, as he tells us, obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Sec 1 Tim. 1. 13. "Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." This was what made him fall in weakness and in terror to the earth. "Who art thou, Lord?" were the words of his reply to the voice which said unto him, "Why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" Had he better known who Jesus was, he would have been less likely to persecute his church. It is ignorance that prompts usually the slander, enmity, and ill treatment which differing sects of Christians often meet with from each other. We note too much the points on which we are at variance. We know too little, or think too little, of the many and most important matters in which we are agreed.

"And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;" and yet Saul neither knew Jesus, nor had ever seen Him. To do ill then to the disciples of Christ, is counted for doing ill unto Himself. And we may apply to any evil usage, which Christians are tempted to inflict upon each other, we may apply what our Lord said, of giving food unto the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the afflicted; "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25. 40. How ought we then to watch, lest in any way we injure or oppress a fellow creature, and above all a fellow Christian! It is Christ whom we persecute, if we persecute his brethren. It is Christ whom we wrong, defraud, or slander, if we slander, defraud, or wrong any one of the least of those, whom He has allowed to be called by his name.

And now observe what an instant change was made in the intentions of Saul the persecutor. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is no longer his own will that he consults, but he submits himself to the direction of the very Jesus whom he persecuted; and by his direction he goes into the city, and there waits patiently to be told what he should do. Christ tells him by means of some one else. He uses the ministry of men to direct those whom He would bring into the way of life. And on that ministry we must be content to wait, however much we might prefer to be directed by Himself. Saul had been before blind through ignorance, and now when he arose from the earth, he had lost the use of eyesight. But at the end of three days, it pleased God both to restore his sight, and to enlighten his understanding. However long we have to wait, after once we are awakened to the necessity of caring for the soul; however long we have to wait ere we can know the truth, or be sure that indeed we know it; let us use the means which God appoints, let us go where He tells us, and consult those whom He commissions to instruct us, and we shall at last know certainly what He would have us do.

Lord, what wilt Thou have us to do? Whatsoever be thy will; whatsoever sacrifice Thou requirest; whatever idol we are expected to give up; whatever pain, however irksome, to endure; whatever duty, however difficult, to do; enlighten our minds to know thy will, and move our hearts that we may love to do it!

Saul is baptized and preacheth at Damascus.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the

house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

§ 384. *When we are converted we ought to strengthen the brethren.*

How exact is the description here given to Ananias of the abode and the occupation of St. Paul! "Go in to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth." How lively is the notion which these words convey of that truth which is elsewhere set down in Scripture, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good!" Prov. 15. 3. There is no house in any street, there is no street in any city, there is no city in the whole world, but God knoweth both them that dwell therein, and what they are about. Well is it for us, if of us it may be truly said, "Behold, he prayeth." Well it is, if God sees in our families that we kneel down together to ask his blessing, and to proclaim his praise. Well it is, if when most we are alone, when we have entered into our chamber and shut to the door; well it is, if the voice that here spake to Ananias can still truly say of us, "Behold, he prayeth." No sight can be more welcome unto those who have joy over a repentant sinner; no sight can be more acceptable to God, who would have all men come to repentance; than for us, his fallen creatures, to draw nigh to Him with the confidence of sons, through the mediation of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Whether we are alone or in company, whether at home or abroad, whether at leisure or engaged in business, let us still feel that God is nigh to hear, and glad to hear our prayers.

For this end it is necessary that we both see clearly and feel deeply the things which belong unto our peace. There must fall from our eyes those scales of error, which make us blind to God's mercy in the Gospel; which render us insensible to the love of Christ in dying to save our souls. We must receive our sight, and also, like St. Paul, be strengthened. We must obtain grace to help from God most high. Whatever change we have already undergone, so far as it has been for good, has been of God's doing. Whatever change we yet need must be also of his gift. And to obtain his precious promises it is required that we pray as He commands. We must exert ourselves according to what measure of grace we have, if we would hope, through God's mercy, to have more. We must not look for a conversion so sudden, so sensible, so unsought for, as this of the apostle Paul. We must not presumptuously suppose that God sees in us any such great fitness for any so good a work; or that we are in any such sense, as he was, chosen vessels unto the Lord. By grace we stand through faith; and one of the chiefest of all graces is humility. Let us think humbly of ourselves, and God will raise us up; let us feel how greatly we need improvement, and He will be more likely to change us for the better.

And especially when we are ourselves converted, let it be an object most dear unto our hearts, to convert or to strengthen our brethren. This is the first thing we hear of Saul after his conversion, "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." The further we have been from preaching Him ourselves, either by our lips or our lives, the nearer we have been to persecuting Him, the more we have approached by our repeated sins to crucifying the Son of God afresh; the more let us desire, the more let us endeavour, by the tenor of our lives, and by the utterance of our lips, to do honour to the Lord who bought us. And in this matter, the address of Ananias to his convert, may serve for a useful guide. "Brother Saul," is the name by which he calls one who had so lately persecuted the Church. As brethren let us address the most hardened sinners; as brethren let us address the most determined unbelievers, if we would hope to win them unto faith in Christ.

Saul is laid wait for both by the Jews and by the Grecians.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 ' But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and

how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

1 2 Cor. 11. 32.

§ 385. *How we ought to profit by the day of prosperity.*

In the escape of St. Paul from Damascus, we learn how vain are the devices of men to hurt those whom God desires to save; or to hinder that work which He designs to do. Whilst the enemies of Paul "watched the gates day and night to kill him," his friends let him down out of the city "by the wall in a basket." It mattered not how mean was the conveyance, where the object was so important and the end so excellent. It matters not how humble be the post, how servile the work, how unworthy of our birth, or station, or abilities, in the estimation of the world, if the progress of the Gospel is concerned, or our own proficiency in faith and grace. No situation in which these can place us, no duty which these can require at our hands, ought to be counted too mean for the most noble, too low for the most eminent of Christ's disciples.

And now when Saul was safe out of Damascus, the disciples at Jerusalem refused his company, supposing that he was not a true believer in Christ. This shews us, how lasting are the ill effects of errors once committed, of sins once known against us. However sincere our repentance may have been, even true disciples will not give us credit for it, and the world will scarcely ever believe it to be true. But the more we feel or apprehend this hardship for ourselves, let us the more labour to remove it from the path of our brethren. Barnabas, the son of consolation as he is called, took Paul "and brought him to the apostles." This is an office we may be glad to execute, to introduce to the communion of true believers those who have been heretofore estranged from the faith. This is an office which we may render easy to our neighbours, by being ready to receive those whom they thus bring to us. This is an office which might be rendered almost needless in the church, if we would all think less hardly of the brethren who offend; if we were ready, in their repentance, to believe all things, to hope all things. See 1 Cor. 13. 7. The disciples were all afraid of Paul, when they believed not that he was a disciple. It is only perfect love which "casteth out fear." 1 John 4. 18. And nothing can remove from our hearts, in the conversion of our offending brethren, all suspicion of their sincerity, all apprehension for our own security; nothing but that charity which "believeth all things."

At Jerusalem, we are told of Paul, that "he spake boldly, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him." The Grecians mean those Jews who spake the Grecian language, and used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. And these, we may remember, were the very persons with whom Saul had joined hands at the death of the first martyr Stephen. Now that he feels the sinfulness of having consented to that death, they are among the first whom he tries to convince by argument that Jesus was the Christ. If there be any whom we are conscious of having encouraged in their sins, or whom we remember as having helped to encourage us, let us not hesitate, when we ourselves know better, to convince them also of the truth. The Grecians went about to slay Saul. Those with whom it may be our duty to dispute, will more probably go about to silence us with scorn. But what might we not gladly encounter, either of ridicule, or shame, or pain, to give to those whom we once have loved the peace which we now feel ourselves, or to save them from that endless misery from which we have learned to fly with fear and trembling.

When the brethren had saved Paul from the hands of the Grecians, and sent him forth to Tarsus, the churches, we are told, had rest "and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." This is the right use of rest from persecution, for a church to grow in numbers and in grace. This is the right employment of respite from affliction, for the soul to make progress in holiness and in love. But how seldom do we thus profit by the day of prosperity! How seldom in the history of the church, or in the record of our own memories, do we find that as our blessings have been multiplied, our hearts have been more fixed on heaven, or our thanks more freely offered to the Giver of all good gifts! God make us for the future to profit by our joys, or else continue to chasten us for our good! God help us, whilst we rest, to walk in fear, to be edified and to edify one another, or else bring us, by withholding from us rest on earth, to peace eternal in the heavens!

St. Peter healeth Æneas; raiseth Tabitha from the dead.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa,

and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not || delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

|| Or, be grieved.

§ 386. *That we must not despise the lowly.*

We have here an account of two great miracles wrought by Peter, as he was passing throughout all quarters to confirm the faith of the early church. In the first of them we may observe how carefully the apostle ascribed the glory unto his Lord: "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." Not by his own power did he pretend to do this thing, not for his own credit did he desire to do it. Not for our own credit, not by any power or any might of ours, let us think to do any good thing, not thus let us desire to be of use unto our brethren, or to improve ourselves. It is Jesus Christ that makes us whole. It is He, who by the atonement of his blood has healed our infirmities, and enabled us to walk in newness of life. It is his grace which moves us to the good that we desire, which works in us the good we do. Let us be careful to ascribe it to his mercy. Let us be glad to think of Him and of his love, on every occasion that occurs for fulfilling his will. Whether it be that we help to heal the sick, whether we labour in the instruction of the ignorant, whether we work to give food unto the hungry, or contribute to deal forth the bread of life unto the nations which still lie in darkness and in the shadow of death; in any case let it be, not our pleasure, but our Lord's, that we are thinking of. Or rather let it be our pleasure to think of his.

Of Dorcas it is observed, that "this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died." The good, we see, die as surely as the evil, as painfully, as suddenly, and according to our reckoning as unseasonably. For it is not in this present life, in the enjoyment of its blessings, or in the length of its continuance, that the chief advantages of faith and piety are found. Nor are the services of any Christian, however eminent, however highly honoured or painfully regretted, of such value in the sight of God, as that He cannot afford to cut them short. In the midst of our good works and almsdeeds which we do, or which at least it is our duty to perform, we are liable, each hour of our lives to sickness and to death. "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke 12. 20, is a summons no less likely to be sent to the most patient and persevering saint, than to the most careless and wilful sinner. But how different are the feelings with which it would be received! How different in Scripture is the account of that fool, as he is called, to whom this summons was proclaimed, from the blessedness of those who die in the Lord! "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Rev. 14. 13.

Pleasant it is in this world for their remaining friends to see on earth the fruit of their labours. Welcome to Peter was the sight which these widows who stood by him weeping shewed, "the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." But what is all that here we can effect, to what we hope hereafter to enjoy? What is the little good that we can do on earth, to the treasure which is laid up for us in heaven? And who that can hope for the departed that they are gone to that better place, who would wish them back again here? Not for her own good, we must suppose, but only for the benefit of the church, was Dorcas recalled to life. For her it must have been far better to depart and to be with Christ. For them it was most profitable that she should be raised again to dwell amongst the saints upon the earth. "It was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord." Thus what was her loss was gain to them, and therefore also we doubt not joy to her. Whether by our life or by our death, whether by our patience in well doing or our fortitude in dying, we can most help to edify others, or to minister to God's glory, we should be alike contented, thankful, joyful.

Cornelius seeth a vision.

1 There was a certain man in *Cæsarea* called *Cornelius*, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, *Cornelius*.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial

before God.

5 And now send men to *Joppa*, and call for one *Simon*, whose surname is *Peter*:

6 He lodgeth with one *Simon* a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto *Cornelius* was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to *Joppa*.

§ 387. *How we ought to value the ministry of man.*

It is plain that before *Cornelius* became a Christian, he was a worshipper of the true God. For he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house." And in proof of his fearing God, it is added that he "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." It is the very substance of all practical religion, to feel that devotion unto God which inclines us to frequent prayer, and that cordial love of man, of which one fruit is abundant almsgiving. And this religious practice was attained to, we see, in no small degree by *Cornelius*, whilst yet he was unacquainted with the Christian faith. He had learned to pray devoutly. He had learned to give much alms. All which he had learned perhaps in part from the instruction of his Gentile parents; but chiefly from the Jews amongst whom he dwelt, and from the Jewish Scriptures, to which he now had access. For though probably not a proselyte, certainly not circumcised according to the flesh, he was one of those whom St. Paul describes as being Jews inwardly; whose circumcision is "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. 2. 29.

The prayers and almsgiving of *Cornelius* went up for a memorial before God. They served to remind Him of his gracious promises, and of the wants of this his devoted servant. But prayers and alms, and charity, and piety, are not enough for the fulfilment of our present joy, much less for the justifying of our souls, in the day when our works shall follow us. No, there must be prayers more fervent than our own, there must be love more pure than any we can feel, bounty more large than any we can exercise; there must be the love of Christ in dying for us, the mercy of God in forgiving us, the intercession of the Holy Spirit in our behalf. These things are necessary for our being saved in the end. And these things it is good for us now to know; it is most important for our safety that in these things we should now believe. And therefore the more large were the alms of *Cornelius*, and the more continual his prayers, God was so much the more pleased to vouchsafe this vision, to send this angel, and to bring him by these means unto faith in Christ. Let not us then ever make light of this only sure foundation, on which true religion can be built. Let not us suppose that any prayers or almsgiving can avail, where faith in Jesus might be duly had, but is not. We have been told in this matter what we ought to do. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," this is our direction, "and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16. 31. From faith in our redemption through his blood must spring devotion unto God, and goodwill towards man, prayer and praise, and attendance on the preaching of God's word, almsgiving, and forgiving of offences, peacemaking among brethren, and peace within ourselves.

But these things we can neither rightly know, nor correctly practise, without the help of that teaching by the ministry of the church, which Christ has for this end ordained. And accordingly *Cornelius* is thus instructed, "Send men to *Joppa*, and call for one *Simon*, whose surname is *Peter*:" "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The angel was not to answer that anxious inquiry, "What is it, Lord?" Nor would the Lord Himself enlighten this new convert by direct revelation from on high. It was his will that *Peter* should be sent for. It is his pleasure to use the ministry of man in making known the Gospel to the world. It is not enough that we give alms and pray, we must also wait upon the ordinances of the church. We must attend on public worship. We must join in the prayers of the congregation, and listen to the preaching of the clergy. We must call on them, or send for them, and consult them, on the things which we ought to know and do. For so it is God's pleasure to bring good out of infirmity, out of weakness to perfect strength, and by the help of our frail fellow creatures to support our frailty and to confirm our faith.

Lord, by whatever means Thou thinkest good to teach us what we ought to do, make us intent to learn! Help us both to pray and to give alms! help us both to hear and to believe, both to hear those whom Thou hast sent to teach, and to believe all which Thou hast condescended to reveal!

St. Peter seeth a vision.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what

this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

§ 388. *Vain distinctions.*

It is not easy to say what was the nature of the visions vouchsafed to Peter and to Cornelius. Certainly they were made to see in some lively manner the things here described as seen, and to hear so as to be sure they heard the words here described as spoken. But how they were thus admitted to hold converse with the world of spirits is more than we may be able to explain. Only we are sure that with God all things are possible. And if any one should still ask us how these things are consistent with the state in which we here live, we may answer in the words of St. Paul, spoken of his own vision and revelation of the Lord: "whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth." 2 Cor. 12. 2.

In this vision the apostle was instructed in the duty now to be performed, by a reference to the distinction between different kinds of animals in the Jewish law. Some were counted clean, and allowed to be eaten. Some were called unclean, which the Jews were forbidden even to touch. See Levit. 5. 2. And therefore Peter, when desired in this vision to eat of all manner of beasts and creeping things and fowls, did no more than his duty as a Jew, in answering, "Not so, Lord." But that which may be right for us to say or do, when we know but little of God's will, becomes wrong, when by his grace we are enlightened to know more. The commandments, which God laid upon the Jews for a time, must give way to those which He reveals to be binding on all Christians, unto the end of the world. And so also the duties which seem binding upon Christians, when first they feel the force of their Christian obligations, are often in their progress superseded by others, which require of us more eminent devotion, or more enlarged love. At first we may be struck with the importance of separation from an evil world. Afterwards we may come to hope of the very worst whom we behold, that they may be better in God's sight than we suppose, and learn to count nothing common or unclean which He may for Christ's sake have cleansed. Distinctions which at first we think important, afterwards seem as nothing in comparison with things in which the most different of mankind agree. To be of divers nations, to profess divers creeds, these things are lost sight of, when we consider as we ought, how God has made of one blood all nations on the earth, has redeemed through one Saviour the whole race of mankind, and through Christ will assuredly save in the end all in any nation and of any creed, who fear Him, and work righteousness. See ver. 35.

Thrice was this sign given unto Peter, thrice this declaration made, that he should not call common what God had cleansed. This repetition shewed how surely the sign would be fulfilled. For thus Joseph told Pharaoh of his dream: "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twicc; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Gen. 41. 32. Thus God often, in his dealings with us his creatures, repeats his lessons of instruction, for the further satisfaction of our reluctant hearts. Never then may we be backward to communicate any good we are permitted to receive! Never in any blessing God has to bestow may we count ourselves more worthy than our neighbours, or reckon those who to us seem most unworthy, as being in God's sight common or unclean!

Cornelius rehearseth the matter to St. Peter.

24. And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what

intention ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

§ 389. *How we ought to esteem none common or unclean.*

Cornelius is waiting for the arrival of St. Peter, fully expecting to be instructed in the chief things which ever after he must do. He has called together his kinsmen and friends that they may share his advantage and be partakers of his joy. "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him." This shewed both his sense of the apostle's authority, and his ignorance of the religion which he was now to learn. He offered to his fellow creature that outward homage which is due to God alone. "But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." This is a sufficient proof that no manner of religious worship ought ever to be paid, either to the apostle Peter, or to any other of the creatures of God. How sinful then is that worship, how injurious to the honour of God, how perilous to the salvation of man, which in the church of Rome is often paid to saints and angels! Thankful we ought to be that we are exempt from the contamination of this gross offence, watchful that we no less diligently avoid that sin which is in Scripture pronounced to be most like unto idolatry, the love of money.

And further, these words of the apostle may serve to put us on our guard against giving or receiving any too servile attentions from each other, as between man and man. Distinctions of rank remain under the Gospel, which would have the great still great, but poor in spirit; the poor still poor, but rich in grace. For though neither poor nor rich ever cease out of the land, we are all made equal by the same hope of heaven, by the same redemption through Jesus Christ. In this sense the brother of low degree is now exalted; and the rich brother now made low. See James 1. 9, 10. And how can it agree with such Christian equality, for those who have this world's advantages to treat as far inferior to themselves such as are most poor and abject? When therefore the most wretched of our kind endeavour thus to abase themselves in our presence, asking perhaps for alms, or acknowledging some help received, with a homage fit only to be paid to God, let us feel within our hearts the force of this address, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." I am come of the same blood, let us feel, whether we so say or not, I am come of the same blood, I am made of the same dust, as yourself. I was born with the same propensity to sin. I expect to return to the same dishonour in the grave. It is only by God's goodness that I enjoy this advantage for a time. This rank or wealth, authority or ability, this refinement of nature or education, these are talents entrusted to my care to be adorned with due proportion of humility and love. Earnestly I hope that ere long we may both share alike in endless glory. Earnestly I desire, in the mean time, to esteem others better than myself, and to treat with most kind attention those who are in any respect inferior or worse.

In this sense we might feel of all our fellow creatures that there is nothing common or unclean. In this way we ought to shew that we so feel, by speaking with affection, and never with contempt, of those who in points of blessings or advantages appear to be the most beneath ourselves. Oftentimes, when we the least suppose it, their prayers are heard, however ill expressed, and their alms, though no more than the mites of the widow, are had in remembrance in the sight of God. It is the heart that God looks to in all we do, or rather it is the soul within the heart. It is that which still lives when the heart is cold; which, when all that here makes us differ shall have ceased, will still live for ever and ever. Then will God bring down the mighty from their seat, and exalt the humble and meek. Then He will fill the hungry with good things, and the rich He will then send empty away. They who now treat with cold disdain the most abject of their brethren, or exact for themselves that homage which it ill becomes even the highest to receive, shall then begin with shame to take the lowest place. Whilst they who reject such unseemly courtesy, and had rather wait on others than be waited on, shall be invited by Him who was the servant of all, "Friend, go up higher." Luke 14. 10.

St. Peter preacheth Christ to Cornelius.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, ¹ Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

37 That word, *I say*, ye know which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with

him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43 ² To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

¹ Deut. 10. 17. Rom. 2. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 17.

² Jer. 31. 34. Mic. 7. 18.

§ 390. *The importance of baptism.*

St. Peter now sees, and plainly declares, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is open to Gentiles no less than to Jews. Not only to the children of Abraham after the flesh, but to all who are children of his faith the Gospel is ever open; to any, of any nation, who like Cornelius, learn to fear the true God, and for his sake to be charitable to mankind, to all these is redemption through Christ proclaimed. These in due season God calls to become Christians, or counts, as we hope, for believers in his Son, though through lack of zeal on our part, they never hear his name. Oh that like the apostle, when we learn this truth, we would at once begin to help in the preaching of the word, would make the conversion of the heathen the object of our daily prayer, and of our abundant contribution! Oh, that the more we own God's righteousness in being no respecter of persons, we would the more endeavour to make known to all mankind his mercy in Christ Jesus!

This, we see, is the way St. Peter reasoned. "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is, accepted with him." What then? Is it a matter of indifference to make known unto such hearers the glad tidings of salvation? Far from it. This is so much the more reason to preach peace by Jesus Christ. For this so much the more emboldens us to hope, that in every nation are some who would receive the word with joy, and who receiving it themselves, would help largely to make it known to others. And thus might they who now only fear the Lord, learn further to love his holy name; they who now work righteousness in ignorance, might learn to work by faith in Christ. Whilst the thousands who now neither work nor fear, who live as though there were no death, and die as though there were no life to come, these thousands and millions of the heathen might be wrought upon to lead a life of holiness, and to hope for a blessed immortality.

And what an account is this which is here given of our Lord, how well fitted to move the hearts of Gentiles, as yet unacquainted with his history! That Jesus of Nazareth was anointed "with the Holy Ghost and with power;" that He "went about doing good;" that He healed "all that were oppressed of the devil;" that He was put to death by the Jews, raised the third day, shewed openly to chosen witnesses, ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead, and set forth, both by prophecy of old, and by the testimony of the Spirit at that hour, as the propitiation for the sins of all mankind; this was what St. Peter preached to Cornelius and his company, this is what we ought to endeavour to make known to all mankind.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Here again there was no respect of persons. The kinsmen and near friends of Cornelius, see ver. 24, were all manifestly endued with power from on high, fitting them to be witnesses of the truth which they had heard. And St. Peter thus encouraged to extend to all the character and privileges of Christians, "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." What a note of honour for this Christian ordinance, that even where the Holy Ghost was first manifestly given, baptism must be afterwards administered! What a proof that baptism may be conferred, yea and also the gifts of the Holy Ghost, where there has been neither any great length of service, nor any evidence of a permanent impression. To be baptized is one thing; to be saved is another. To be put in the way of salvation, and to have the grace of the Holy Ghost given us, this if we abuse his gifts, if we walk not faithfully in that way, this will but increase our condemnation.

Peter justifieth his going in to the Gentiles.

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cæsarea unto me.

12 And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, ¹as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, ²John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

¹ Ch. 2. 4.

² John i. 26.

§ 391. *Repentance unto life.*

That Peter should have baptized men that were uncircumcised, nay that he should so much as have eaten with them, this gave great scandal to the Jews, even to those who were converted to the Christian faith. For as yet they were far from being aware that the Gospel would be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of God's people Israel. And we find that they contended with Peter on the subject. So that this apostle had no such supreme authority as some have without reason supposed. And this is a point which it is well for us to note in this history of the early church. For where our Lord has so earnestly entreated in our behalf that we all should be one, we ought to be well assured that there are good reasons for our differing from those, who most confidently profess themselves to be alone in the right.

"But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning." This was the way he encountered their contention; not by strife, but by persuasion; not by contending again, but by setting before them calmly the facts of the case. For us also it is good to hear this history repeated, that we may note what great pains were taken to satisfy those Christians who had been Jews, of God's merciful intentions towards the Gentiles. The vision vouchsafed to Peter, the angel that appeared to Cornelius, the Holy Ghost which fell on them that heard, and the word of the Lord which had foretold this baptism by the Holy Ghost, all these things led the way to this one plain conclusion: "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" This is the conclusion we ought to come to, whenever we are aware that God's will is opposed to our thoughts or wishes. We have God's word for our guidance. We have our consciences enlightened by his grace. How often are these at variance with our own inclinations! And what are we that we should withstand God? What are we, that we should murmur against Him? Why hold we not our peace, and glorify God? Why shew we not forth his praise by the thankful submission of our lives?

God hath granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life. This was the conclusion thus forced upon the Jews. This is a conviction which should now fill our hearts with joy: that unto us who hear these words this grant is made, this gift is given. "Repentance unto life." Not life without repentance. Not life eternal without a change first wrought in our hearts and lives. No, it is "repentance unto life." It is to be changed here, as our way to be glorified hereafter. It is to be made pure, and humble, and meek, and charitable, whilst yet we are on earth, that we may be fit to dwell for ever with God in heaven. We read in Scripture of no state between the two. We hear of no place where that change can be secured, if not on earth. As the tree falls, so it lies. As the Christian leaves his abode on earth, so he stands before the judgment seat of Christ. Now therefore let us strive to repent. Now let us pray daily for the grace of repentance.

Lord, grant to us thy servants repentance unto life. Gentiles we should have now been, but for thy calling and election, given up to ignorance and idolatry. Grant that being Christians, as now we are, we may make our calling and election sure, we may, through Christ, live for ever!

Barnabas is sent to Antioch.

19 ¹ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves ^{||} with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa:

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

¹ Ch. 8. 1.

^{||} Or, in the church.

§ 392. *How to behave in times of general distress.*

The persecution that arose about Stephen was the means of sending forth preachers of the Gospel to Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch. These at the first preached only to the Jews, of whom there were then many scattered in every city. And through this dispersion of the Jews, it came to pass, that wherever the first disciples preached, there were hearers who knew something of the prophecies, and who worshiped the true God instead of idols. And these when they were converted, "spake unto the Grecians," preached the Lord Jesus to their Gentile neighbours. "And a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord;" a great number both of the dispersed Jews, and of the Grecians to whom they spake. In which matter we see one of the many uses that are derived to the whole Gentile world from the religion of the Jews. And we learn that as the law was to the Jews their schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ, see Gal. 3. 24, so were they also to the Gentiles guides and instructors, going before and teaching us in the way of life. How then can we doubt that their existence at this moment, as a dispersed but distinct nation, is designed for some great use in making known unto the world the riches of God's mercy in Christ? How could we better help towards propagating the Gospel abroad, than by sober serious and sincere endeavours, for the conversion of the Jews at home?

The Christians at Jerusalem, hearing of this success, and being now aware that to the Gentiles God had granted repentance unto life, ver. 18, sent Barnabas to visit their new brethren. And Barnabas both exhorted them himself, and sent for Saul to share his joy, and to enforce his exhortation. Let us be willing, if we have any good work in hand, to impart to others a share in our satisfaction. Let us not hesitate, out of jealousy or pride, to call in, as did Barnabas, one greater than himself, if we may thus hope to do more good unto our brethren, more honour to our Lord. For a whole year these two laboured together in this single place. This was no small time to stay, for one who had so much as Paul to do. But though he had yet to preach in cities without number, he was contented to pass one whole year at Antioch. Hence we may learn not to be hasty in changing any situation, in which God has once permitted us to settle. The inconveniences we feel where we are, and the advantages we might gain by a removal, oftentimes seem far greater than they really are. Time too is always lost by change. And how little of time have we on earth to spare! How much work for God have we here need to do! And how short is our season for doing it!

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." This was a name by which they were first known among their enemies. This was a name to which they were not ashamed to own, when it provoked persecution or contempt. And well did they adorn this most excellent of names, by what is here recorded to their honour, the sending from Antioch relief into Judæa, against a time of great dearth throughout all the world. At such a season how readily would the worldly minded think, that we had better lay by all we can for ourselves. But these early Christians thought otherwise. They felt that to the brethren in Judæa they owed the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. They knew probably that these were at least as likely as themselves to suffer in the approaching dearth. They thought more of the sufferings of their brethren than of their own. They "determined to send relief." "Which also they did." Let us learn hence to do what we resolve. Let us learn that in times of general calamity, it is the part and privilege of a Christian to administer more help to others, than he is willing to have ministered to himself. He offers instead of asking for consolation. He foregoes his own claims for his neighbour's benefit. He remembers the saying of the Lord Jesus, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20. 35.

Herod killeth James, and taketh Peter also.

1 Now about that time Herod the king || stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but † prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon

him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street: and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

|| Or, began.

† Or, instant and earnest prayer was made.

§ 393. *Deliverance from spiritual captivity.*

The magistrate, we are told by the apostle, "beareth not the sword in vain." Rom. 13. 4. That is to say, he has a right to put to death all those who are condemned by equitable laws. But what a grievous abuse of kingly authority was this which Herod is here said to have committed; "he killed James the brother of John with the sword." And what a fearful reason for taking "Peter also," because he saw that the killing James pleased the people! There is no more sure road unto the practice of all manner of iniquity, than to be loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. This it was that urged Herod to repeat an act of cruelty, which under the show of kingly power, was only so much the more offensive murder. This it is which tempts many to utter courteous falsehood, rather than offend by unwelcome truth. This it is which makes others often to neglect their prayers, to suppress their convictions of religious truth, and rather than be grieved by their neighbours' scorn themselves, to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Never let us begin, lest we know not how far we shall go. Never let us enter on this way of pleasing men: for the first step taken knowingly in what is wrong, makes us guilty of all that may ensue.

Thus Peter was put in prison, and delivered into the charge of four quaternions of soldiers. "But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Which then shall we esteem the strongest, the bars of the prison house, or the voice of the Christian's prayer? the four quaternions of soldiers, or the unarmed and defenceless church? Behold, that very night, ere Herod would bring Peter forth, and give up his life to the fury of the people, the chains of the apostle are loosed, the darkness of his cell is lighted up with heavenly glory; and with an angel for his guide, he walks out into the city, as if there had been no force to hinder him! The light shined in the prison, but the soldiers saw not. The angel spake aloud, and smote Peter on the side, but the soldiers heard not. Even the apostle himself scarce knew what was done, "but thought he saw a vision;" as the Israelites are represented to have said when delivered from captivity, "then were we like unto them that dream." Ps. 126. 1. So far above all that here we should expect is God's present mercy to his faithful servants! So far above all that here we can imagine are the good things He has in store for them for ever!

Who then is now burthened with the chains of sin? who barred up within the walls of evil propensities, or long indulged habits of iniquity? Let him behold the light from heaven, that has shined on the prison house of this lower world. Let him follow the messenger of God's covenant, who alone can give liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison unto them that are bound. See Is. 61. 1. "Arise up quickly." This is the voice that awakens us from spiritual sleep. "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals." These are our orders for what we have to do the moment we are awake. No time is to be lost. No pains, no preparation of ours must be neglected. We must not argue, that because God does so much for us, therefore we need do nothing; because the angel has opened the prison door, therefore let him also bind on our sandals, or enable us to do as well without them. No, we must do what we can. We must do all that we are bidden to do ourselves; and be thankful also for all that is done for us. When, through God's help, we are put in the way of safety, we must strive to work out our own salvation. And when we have ground to think that we are really safe, we must be free to own how certainly we know, that we owe all our deliverance unto God.

Peter is in safety. Herod is eaten up of worms.

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came *||* to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, it is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and *there* abode.

20 And Herod † was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus ‡ the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*.

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made *jurament* unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* * ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

|| Or, to ask who was there.

† Or, bare an hostile mind, intending war.

‡ Gr. that was over the king's bedchamber.

* Or, charge, ch. 11. 29, 30.

§ 394. *Against the love of worldly distinction.*

Whilst Peter was in prison, prayer was made in his behalf by the church without ceasing unto God. And now that he is set free, at the first house he visited, he found many "gathered together praying." They were praying probably at that midnight hour for him whom they supposed to be in prison, and whom Herod meant to have brought forth to judgment the very next morning. Let us learn hence to persevere in prayer unto the end, not for temporal but for spiritual deliverance. Our sins may be many, our strength small, our hope feeble. But let our faith at least be large. Let us pray in faith, nothing doubting. In the hour when our danger is most extreme, up to the moment when our fall seems most unavoidable, let us pray in faith, nothing doubting that God will make us a way to escape. And behold, whilst we pray, our chains are loosed, we are saved from what we most deeply feared, shame now, and death for ever. The damsel who came to hearken when Peter knocked, "opened not the gate for gladness." See the folly of giving way to such violent emotions, as endanger the very safety of those, whom we should be most glad to save! See how much better it is, like Peter, to consider the thing soberly, than like Rhoda, not to open the gate for gladness! See the evil of distrusting information, merely because it appears improbable! It was want of trust that made the disciples answer, "Thou art mad;" and again, "It is his angel." True charity opens the gate for gladness. True faith gives us always the conviction, that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Whilst Peter was receiving the kind greetings of his friends, Herod was enraged at the loss of his prisoner, and commanded that the keepers "should be put to death." Visitations, which move not the sinner to repent, seem usually to harden his obdurate heart. And here we see to what extremity of injustice a man may come, by acting on suspicion without proof. For Herod probably supposed of those keepers, that either wilfully or negligently they had let the apostle go. Let us take always for our guide in judgment, whether of public affairs or in private conduct, the Christian rule, that we think no evil. Let us never treat a fellow creature as guilty, let us if possible never suppose him to be guilty, as long as he might yet possibly prove innocent.

Not content with doing evil, Herod coveted the praise of doing well. He refused not the flattery of the blaspheming multitude, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." What a fearful instance have we here, of God's power to punish the most daring sinners, of his determination to bring low those who most highly exalt themselves! How should it make us loathe the flattery of the world, and dread even the least approach to a sinful love of worldly distinction! How careful, how watchful should it make us to give the praise of whatever advantages we possess, and especially of whatever good we are enabled to do, to God who doeth it in us, to Christ who liveth in us the life we live, so far as it is a life of holiness and love! Then might we not fear to die, if we were to live continually unto the Lord. Then should we not be dejected at the thought, that worms shall destroy this body, if we were firmly persuaded that yet in our flesh we shall see God; and also that in Him we shall see, not a Judge that will sentence us to death, but a Saviour who will deliver us into eternal life.

Paul and Barnabas are sent forth by the Holy Ghost.

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, ¶ which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas

and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

¶ Or, Herod's foster brother.

§ 395. *The sin of turning men away from the truth.*

The separation of Barnabas and Saul for the work to which the Holy Ghost had called them, is a thing to be carefully observed; as throwing light on the appointment of ministers, at this early period of the church, whether to the office of the ministry in general, or to any particular situation. At that time, when miraculous gifts were vouchsafed, the Spirit gave utterance to the will of God, by means of those who had the gift of prophesying. And probably in this manner it was signified to the church, that Barnabas and Saul were to be ministers. But besides this call of the Spirit, they were also outwardly appointed, by the laying on of the hands of those who were already in the sacred office. See Acts 8. 18. And this practice is still retained amongst our Ives. Ministers are appointed at set times and places, by persons duly authorized, and in the presence of the congregation; so that all may know the source of their authority. In the absence of miraculous gifts, it is put to their own consciences to answer, whether they are inwardly called and moved by the Holy Ghost. And this point is also further ascertained by inquiry into the fruit of the Spirit, the holiness of their lives; the people amongst whom they have previously resided, being charged, if they know of cause why they should not be admitted into holy orders, to signify the same forthwith. Let those therefore who would profit by the ministry of the church, watch for and pray for those who are likely to be ministers. Let them pray that it may please God to bless their ordination, and to bless their work when they are ordained.

The first thing recorded in the joint mission of Paul and Barnabas, is what happened in the case of Sergius Paulus and Elymas the sorcerer. The deputy called for them "and desired to hear the word of God." The sorcerer endeavoured "to turn away the deputy from the faith." Here we have two important lessons; a warning against hindering the faith of others, and an encouragement to zeal and eagerness in hearing the word of God. We cannot too earnestly desire to be edified. We cannot be too anxious to learn "the doctrine of the Lord." And the more we desire, and the more diligently we attend upon the means of grace, we may confidently expect that we shall believe with the more lively faith, and obey with the more hearty zeal. Let us therefore resort to God's house, where his word is preached. Let us, when we cannot leave our homes, send for those who are appointed to instruct us. Let us be glad to read what has been written for our instruction by ministers and members of the church, remote from us in distance, or removed by death. And above all, let us study with devout attention that volume, which contains the record of what holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. See 2 Peter 1. 21.

But how different, how fearful, is the course of those, who not content with being careless of their own salvation, endeavour to corrupt their brother's faith, who seem to wish, by adding numbers to their cause, to divert their own attention from the sad suspicion, that it is weak, and vain, and baseless! Far be from us all such mad attempts to darken counsel by words without knowledge! See Job 38. 2. Far be from us that laxity of principle which would undermine the principles of our neighbours! Far be from us that looseness or carelessness of living, which corrupts both the faith and practice of those who behold our inconsistency! Let us labour rather that we may help others to believe better, by adorning our own faith with holiness of life. Let us thus help to give light unto our brethren; and we shall daily be more enlightened ourselves.

Paul preacheth at Antioch in Pisidia.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

¹ Exod. 1. 1.

² Exod. 13. 14. 16.

³ Josh. 14. 1.

⁴ Judg. 3. 9.

⁵ 1 Sam. 8. 5.

⁶ 1 Sam. 16. 13.

⁷ Ps. 89. 20.

⁸ Is. 11. 1.

⁹ Matt. 3. 1.

¹⁰ John 1. 20.

§ 396. *The Gospel addressed to the understanding.*

Here we should observe, nearly at the beginning of St. Paul's laborious journeyings, how little he grudged any toil of travelling, any risk of harm by sea or land, so that he might further the great work he had to do. From Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia, from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia, these were but short travels, compared with those, in which he spent afterwards all his time and strength; and all in the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What a change from the kind of journey which he was taking, when the Lord met him on his way to Damascus, going thither for the purpose of putting Christians into prison! Like unto this change in the apostle's errand must be the alteration in ourselves, from the life we lead whilst we are indifferent to the love of Christ. Then we are on the road to sin, doing harm to our brother Christians by our ill example, and by our unbelief helping to crucify afresh the Saviour of mankind. But as we come to believe in earnest, as we repent from the heart, as we become changed in the inmost soul, then we must be always diligent and patient in well doing, ready to communicate to the wants of others, and sparing no labours which can tend to their advancement in faith and piety, in holiness and love.

Next let us note what was the subject of the apostle's preaching, when the rulers of the synagogue invited him to speak. It was to the Jews who dwelt at Antioch that his discourse was addressed. And he first recited some chief points in the history of their fathers, their deliverance from Egypt, their sojourn in the wilderness, their settlement in the land of Canaan, their long continuance as a nation under judges, whilst the Lord their God was their King, see 1 Sam. 10. 19, and their desiring afterwards to have a king like unto the nations which dwelt around them. Thence he proceeded to mention David, from whom he told them that Jesus was raised "unto Israel a Saviour." And he then reminded them of John's having preached in the wilderness, and having spoken of one that should come after him.

Now this manner of discourse may serve to shew us, that the Gospel is addressed not to our feelings only, but also to our reason or understanding. Our preaching, our exhortation, our admonitions to each other, must refer to facts, to the history of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, to the proofs of the truth of both, to the connection of the one with the other. It must be our object to know well the contents of both. It must be our delight to learn, and to point out, how each helps to make the other at once clear, convincing, and affecting. And in these studies we must shrink from no labour of inquiry, from no irksome work, of hand, and eye, and mind. And what thus we have learnt with pains, we must teach with patience. We must go back again, if necessary, to the first elements of the history, or to the first principles of the doctrine, of Christ. We must bear with the waywardness of children, with the ignorance of them that are but babes in Christ. We must neither evade the inquiries of the thoughtful, nor despise the backwardness of the dull.

May God give us leisure, ability, and zeal, to understand aright, to feel deeply, and to communicate extensively, the precious truths of his most holy word! May He teach us how to study and how to teach, how to know and how to explain to them who are in ignorance, the several portions of his holy book! And ever as more we daily know, may God of his great mercy most graciously enable us also to do the more!

The preaching of Paul at Antioch concluded.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

28 'And though they found no cause of death in *him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of *him*, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.

30 'But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, 'Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, || after he had served his own generation by the will of God, 'fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in 'the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

¹ Matt. 27. 22.

² Matt. 23. 6.

³ Ps. 2. 7. Heb. 1. 5.

⁴ Is. 55. 3.

⁵ Ps. 16. 10.

|| Or, after he had in his own age served the will of God.

⁶ 1 Kings 2. 10.

⁷ Hab. 1. 5.

§ 397. *The necessity of a right foundation.*

St. Paul calls the Gospel which he preached "the word of this salvation." And he tells his hearers that it is sent both to the children of the stock of Abraham, and to all among them that fear God. And now let us observe what chief points he insists upon. The death of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, forgiveness of sins through Him, and the being justified by Him, by believing in Him. These are the glad tidings which St. Paul had to declare unto his hearers. These are the doctrines, which he warns them at peril of their perishing, by no means to despise. And these tidings he confirms by the words of prophecy, very plainly relating to the rising of the Messiah from the dead, and therefore also to his first dying for our sins. This was a very different view of holiness, a very different method of being reconciled to God, from what might be learnt from the law of Moses. And this difference is insisted on at great length, as we are well aware, by the same apostle* in his Epistles; where he shews the insufficiency of the works of the Law, and explains how the just shall live by faith.

Do we then, who are Christians, thus believe? Do we rest our hope of being justified, not in our own works, not in our own faith, but only in Jesus Christ, by our believing in Him? Do we consider these things tidings of great joy? Are these the things noted in our memories as the most welcome of any news we ever heard, that Christ died for us on the cross, that Christ in our behalf arose from the dead, that through Him we have forgiveness of sin, and that, if we believe, by Him we are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses? Would we know certainly how these truths affect our feelings? Let us look to it, and see, how they affect our lives. We shall not altogether neglect to put in practice what we really feel deeply in our hearts. Do we then die with Christ in his death? Do we crucify our affections for his sake? Are we risen again in newness of life, like as Christ was raised from the dead?

"Other foundation," this same apostle tells us, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3. 11. This points to the reason, why our religion does not work in us that effect which we could wish; either of holiness or of a heavenly mind, either of peace, or hope, or joy. We are building on a wrong foundation; or rather it is on no foundation at all. One only can be laid, that is worthy of the name. We have not given due precedency in our thoughts to that chiefest of all mysteries in the Gospel, God manifest in the flesh, see 1 Tim. 3. 16; that mystery which is revealed, explained, fulfilled, in Christ dying for us on the cross. Henceforth let us begin at the right beginning, and we may hope to be more successful in the end. On the right foundation we may expect that we shall raise due height of piety, due fervour of devotion. We may trust, if we begin with devout reliance on the great truths revealed in the Gospel, we may trust that we shall enjoy the great gifts there promised, and reach to the great glory therein set forth.

God teach us to lay the only true foundation! God help us to build thereon a Christian life! God make us, whilst we believe in Christ and in all that He has done for us, God make us to live as Christ has taught us, and to love as Christ has loved us!

Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them † the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, 'I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

† Gr. in the week between, or, in the sabbath between.

¹ Is. 49. 6.

² Matt. 10. 14.

§ 398. *That we must not envy one another.*

"The Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath." This is the first point mentioned concerning those who afterwards believed. They desired to hear the word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing." Rom. 10. 17. This was the first point in their being ordained to eternal life, disposed, prepared, put in order, towards attaining it. Let us but first long to hear the Gospel, and we shall soon joyfully believe it. Let us believe it, and we shall soon be far upon our way towards our inheritance eternal in the heavens. "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." What a delightful account is this, of the zeal which was excited by the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, that a whole heathen city should come together to hear him! How seldom is any large proportion of a Christian town assembled at one hour, though in many places, for worship, or for instruction in religion! How many in each single family are often absent, far more often than they need! How many families scarce send forth one single hearer to the preaching of the word of God! How seldom are the numbers of our worshippers such as to fill with envy those who speak against us! How commonly do our half empty churches rather give ground of triumph to our enemies, bring shame upon ourselves, and do dishonour to the cause of our Redeemer! Oh, if we would continue in the grace of God, let us never neglect his worship in the congregation; let us never fail to come together to hear his word, to praise his goodness, and to implore his grace!

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy." This is a feeling often put on record against them; they grudged the success of the Gospel amongst the Gentiles. Being resolved themselves not to believe, they opposed the conversion of their neighbours, and "spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." And what a severe reproof was this that they received, what an exact description of the course of those, who disbelieve or disobey the Gospel! "Ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." If we refuse to listen, it is our own act and deed, we put the Gospel from us. If we should persist in sin, and perish everlastingly, we ourselves give sentence on ourselves, we judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life. God has thought us meet for it. He has loved us, unworthy sinners as we were, and called us to repent and to believe the Gospel. If we believe not, if we repent not, we are the hinderers of our own peace, we execute against ourselves, as did these envious Jews, the sentence of cutting off from the presence of the Lord.

From their conduct on this occasion let us especially take warning against envying or grudging one another. Let us note of these evil tempers, how besides being most hateful in God's sight, they lead in the end to our own greater loss. Let us grudge no one any good which it may have pleased God to send him. Let us endeavour to share with others any good, with which it may have pleased Him to bless ourselves. And especially if He have given us the knowledge of his truth, if we have found in it comfort against affliction, a guide in prosperity, a source of peace in this present life, and a rock of confidence for the future, let us delight to extend our convictions as widely as we can amongst the hearts of all, who whether Jews or Gentiles, civilized or savages, free or bond, are made of the same flesh with ourselves, redeemed by the Saviour's blood, and heirs of heaven, who but for our neglect, would be counting on, seeking for, and reaching unto, the same everlasting inheritance.

Paul and Barnabas fly from Iconium to Lystra.

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

6 They were wroth of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

§ 399. *Thanks for deliverance from idolatry.*

In the conduct of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium we have profitable instruction both in courage and in prudence. We may learn both how to abide danger boldly for a time, and how to avoid it on due occasions, by timely flight. "They so spake," we are told, "that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." Preaching is the chief means used by God towards the increase of religion in the world. It is by the preaching of his ministers that He awakens the hearts of them that hear, to the sense of heavenly truth. Let us therefore take heed how we hear. Let us pray for them that preach, that a great multitude of their hearers may believe. "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord." They were not prevented by opposition, by ill will, by persecution. They continued in the same place, and persevered in speaking with the same courage. For thus far they might do service in the holy cause in which they were engaged. But when their lives were threatened by assault, then they fled unto the cities of Lycaonia.

"And there they preached the Gospel." This was their great business on earth, as ministers of Jesus Christ. And for the sake of this it was their duty now to fly, as before it was their duty to abide. Let us therefore, whatever duty we have to do, boldly persevere in doing it, as long as we have any prospect of success. Let us fear no evil, shrink from no pain, or trouble, or anxiety; as long as we find that we do God good service. But when his work can no longer be promoted by our staying where we are then we are at liberty to fly. Nay it is our duty to preserve our lives, or the health and peace of mind which makes life useful. These rules we may be seldom called upon to apply by any case of danger to our lives, by any occasion of removal from our homes. But how often might we exercise the like discreet forbearance, or the like Christian courage, in the common occurrences of each day, in encountering displeasure, for the sake of promoting good, or in not persisting to provoke ill will, where no good can be reasonably expected to ensue!

At Lystra, St. Paul wrought a signal miracle, on a man who had been a cripple from his birth. And when the people saw what had been done, they took Paul and Barnabas for gods, saying, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." What a notion does this give us of the effect of miracles, of the amazement and conviction they must have been fitted to produce on the minds of the beholders! What a lively picture this fact presents of the gross ignorance in which the heathen live, how mean and unworthy their notions are of God, that they should be ready to fall down and worship men made of the same nature with themselves! Hence we should do well to think of thanking God, that we have been set free from this grievous ignorance, from this painful bondage to a vile superstition. But whilst we thank Him heartily for his goodness, let us beware that there lurk beneath our thanks no proud satisfaction in our hearts, that we are not as other men are. Let us temper our own joy in our deliverance by deep concern for them that are still in darkness. Let us remember how many millions of our own flesh and blood still bow the knee to idols, still are ready to bring oxen and garlands, and to sacrifice not only to men like unto themselves, but to images, the work of their own hands. To concern in their behalf let us add pains in their instruction. Let no one, however small his means be content without contributing some help towards the conversion of the heathen. And let both poor and rich give abundantly, of that which God graciously accepts of all, their devout and fervent supplication, that He will in his good time make known his Gospel unto all the world.

St. Paul is stoned at Lystra; returns to Antioch.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, ¹ which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 ¹ Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

19 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, ² and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

¹ Gen. 1. 1. Ps. 140. 6. Rev. 14. 7.

² Ps. 81. 12.

³ 2 Cor. 11. 25.

§ 400. *Patience and joy in tribulation.*

We left the men of Lystra prepared to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, by reason of the healing of the cripple. But do we find that these holy men were willing to receive a homage, so flattering to the vanity of the corrupted heart? Far from it. They "ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God." To which words they add immediately an account of what they mean by God, lest their hearers should be thinking of such a being as they were accustomed to understand by that name. The God of whom the apostle spake, is He, "which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." This is a thought which we ought often to recur to, and deeply to impress upon our minds, that it is no other than the Creator of the universe, who is revealed to us in Scripture, as the Father reconciled to us, as the Son redeeming us by the sacrifice of Himself, as the Holy Spirit ever working to make us holy. And this is He, "who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways;" so far at least as not to give them what we call a revelation. Yet on all He bestowed "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." And if this was a witness, which should have made them live a life of holiness and love, oh what ought not we to seek after, what height of piety ought not we to reach, we, who besides what we experience of God's goodness in the outward world, have felt also his mercy in the inner man, have been strengthened by his grace, assured of redemption through the riches of his love, and made to be inheritors of his endless glory?

And now see how vain and fickle is the judgment of the populace! One while they offer sacrifices to St. Paul as to a god. Not long afterwards, at the instance of certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, the same people stone him, and draw him out of the city, "supposing he had been dead." So easily are the passions of the many stirred up by the arts of the designing few! So manifold are the circumstances which force on us the conviction, that the praise of men is all unworthy of our regard, as compared with the praise of God!

St. Paul, who had been thus nearly put to death, "rose up, and came into the city." And from this city he went to Derbe, and so back again to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples," "exhorting them to continue in the faith, and" shewing "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." How forcible to the hearers must this appeal have been, from one who had for their sakes endured so much of suffering, in the very cities which he now was visiting in turn! How greatly should the example, as well as the counsel of St. Paul, help us to rejoice in tribulation! Not that we should not deeply feel any affliction which it may please God to lay on us. It is only if we feel it, that it is affliction, that it can act as chastisement, that it can minister to our joy. For there is such a thing as joy in the midst of sorrow. And this is when we feel that our sorrow comes of God, that He is chastening us for our benefit, that it is good for us to be thus afflicted, and that through our much tribulation, we are making good our entrance into the kingdom of our Father which is in heaven.

The apostles and elders hold a council at Jerusalem.

1 And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, *and said*, 'Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was need-

¹ Gal. 5. 2.

² Chap. 10. 20. & 11. 13.

ful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, 'Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, 'purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, 'to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

³ Chap. 10. 43. 1 Cor. 1. 2.

⁴ Matt. 23. 4.

§ 401. *The test of Christian fellowship.*

Already we read of differences in the infant church. Christians are still but men. And Christianity is oftentimes dishonoured by the ill tempers and evil lives of its professors. As Paul and Barnabas, so are many good Christian teachers, subject to the opposition of the gainsayers, forced to have "dissension and disputation with them." Happy are they who know how to differ without rivalry; how to dispute without wrangling, enmity, or pride! Happy are those disputants, who consent to refer to others wiser than themselves, and in station of higher authority, those questions on which they cannot else agree!

Whilst St. Paul and his companions were on their way to Jerusalem for this purpose, "they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren." Great is the joy we ought to feel at the conversion of the heathen; great the pains which we ought to take towards converting them. Great is the interest which we ought always to be feeling, and the endeavours which we ought always to be making, towards turning the hearts of those amongst professing Christians, who know not and love not Christ. Our means towards these objects are, first, that we should ourselves shew forth our faith by our works. Next, we should in all things follow after unity; considering that nothing would more help than our agreement as to what the true faith is, towards winning from the ways of endless misery those who are of no faith at all. Thirdly, it is of great importance that we make this very thing a subject of frequent prayer. For so has our church directed us daily to ask of God, that it will please Him to make known his saving health unto all nations. And so has our Lord Himself instructed us; "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Matt. 9. 38. And lastly, we must do all we can to send them forth ourselves. We must, according to our station and ability, contribute to those funds, be they which they may, which are most carefully and effectually expended, in sending forth ministers of the Gospel into lands where it would be else unknown.

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter." Here we have an account of one of the earliest Christian councils, held for the purpose of settling a disputed point of practice. And the question at issue was not unlike to those which have often since arisen amongst Christians, how far the neglect of circumcision ought to exclude men from the communion of the church. Let us observe therefore, for our own guidance in like cases, the exhortation of St. Peter on this occasion. Let us note how he rests his argument for the Gentiles on the fact, that since they had heard the Gospel by his mouth, God had put no difference between them and the Jews, but had given to each the witness of the Holy Ghost, "purifying their hearts by faith." This is the great test to which we ought ever to look, and on which we ought to ground our esteem for each other, even for those who in some opinions may widely differ from ourselves. Has God purified their hearts by faith? Do they lead holy lives? And does their holiness result from believing in the Lord? Is it the work of the Holy Ghost? Is there evidence of its being so? If there be, if we may reasonably hope that they are amongst them that are sanctified, let us not attempt to shut them out from our society. Let us not put upon each other any needless yoke. Let us rejoice to extend to them what we glory to possess, "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Gal. 5. 1. Let us prove, as far as possible, all things. Let us hold as fast as possible that which is good. See 1 Thess. 5. 21. Let us endeavour to persuade others to hold the same. Let us contend earnestly for the faith. See Jude 3. But let us not be contentious. Let us neither force, nor persecute, nor wrangle. Let us hope, and as far as possible, believe of all, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ they shall be saved even as we.

St. James gives sentence in the council at Jerusalem.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 ¹ After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

¹ Amos 9. 11.

§ 402. *What points we ought to yield to our brethren.*

The matter in dispute amongst the disciples at this first council in Jerusalem, was how far all believers in Jesus Christ were bound to observe certain prominent regulations in the law of Moses. St. James, who was in the place of a bishop at Jerusalem, that is to say, was the ruler of the church in that city, gave sentence, pronounced the judgment of the assembly. For this sentence, we cannot doubt, was not his own alone, but was the unanimous decision of the apostles and elders, concurring with his words as he proceeded in his address. How delightful is this pattern of Christian unanimity! How pleasant is the sight of brethren that dwell together in unity! How profitable for that end is reasonable discussion of points on which they are inclined to differ! How necessary is mutual concession, good temper, forbearance, and dutiful submission to them that are in station of authority!

And see how moderate, how charitable this sentence was! How fit a pattern for the decision of those controversies and feuds, which still disturb the peace, and check the growth, of our own Christian community! The apostle first recites the topics of the speech of Peter, here called Simeon, which was his first name, Simon. And these he next confirms, by the words of a prophecy from Amos, plainly implying the design of God, that the Gentiles as well as the Jews should become Christians. But it was clear that ordinances like those of Moses, being fit only for a single nation, could never without confusion and constraint be imposed upon all the people of the earth. St. James therefore proposes that no such burden as circumcision, no such yoke as compliance with all the law of Moses, should be laid upon the Gentile converts. Only he would have them written to, that they should abstain from four things, which were held in abomination by the Jewish law: observing that this law was read in the synagogue each sabbath day, and implying that therefore the Jews were the more likely to be scandalized by these practices. So that charity to others may sometimes make it necessary to put a yoke upon ourselves. Charity to others may make it right to deny ourselves in that which we might otherwise lawfully enjoy. For of these four things, though two were gross sins, two were matters of comparative or utter indifference.

And this may help to shew us what points we ought at any time to yield with readiness, in submission to the advice, or in deference to the scruples of our neighbours. Suppose them to have different opinions from ourselves, whether more or less apparently religious. Suppose them to require us in any degree to conform our lives to theirs. Or suppose it be in some matter of church communion, a difference as to discipline or ritual, that keeps us at variance with each other. In the first place, we ought to change, in compliance with their suggestions, any thing that they can shew us to be plainly wrong. The Gentiles, who were addicted to idolatry, and to the most unbounded practice of impurity, must utterly renounce both, not only out of deference to the scruples of the Jews, but out of obedience to the law of Christ. And secondly, we ought to comply with the suggestions of our brethren in regard also to matters of indifference. If there be any thing which we could change to win their esteem, and which signified no more than the abstaining from things strangled and from blood, in this we should be willing to conform to their desires, rather than estrange them by adhering to our own. To the Jews these seemed matters of importance. And there are Christians to whom matters of no more consequence than these prove hinderances to unity and love. The more stress they lay upon such trifles, let us be the more inclined to yield. For however precious may be the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we must remember above all things, in our conduct to each other, that we never wilfully make our brethren to offend.

The apostles and elders send letters to the churches.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren :

23 And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia :

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law : to whom we gave no *such* commandment :

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication : from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch : and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle :

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the || consolation.

|| Or, *exhortation*.

§ 403. *How under affliction we might rejoice in consolation.*

The question now decided by the council had arisen at Antioch, in consequence of the conduct of Barnabas and Paul. The apostles and elders were therefore careful to send two other brethren, Judas and Silas, as bearers of their decision, to witness that they approved of the apostles' conduct. This shews us how cautious they were to remove all risk of suspicion. And it teaches us how watchful we also ought to be, to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Rom. 12. 17. This we must do for our own sakes first of all; lest, if we venture to disregard appearances, we be more easily tempted to the reality. No one is quite safe from the worst of sins. No one knows how easily he might fall into falsehood, covetousness, intemperance, or lust; if he were wilfully to give the east advantage to the enemy of souls. And further, we must do this also for our brother's sake; lest we should tempt to any false or uncharitable judgment those Christians amongst whom we live. Satan is always nigh to suggest evil thoughts. The opportunity, the possibility to do wrong, is represented to the mind by his evil influence, as making it most probable that wrong is done. Let us therefore avoid all opportunity, cut off when we can all possibility of sin. Then shall we at once escape the risk of sinning, and the risk of leading into sinful and suspicious thoughts "the brother" "for whom Christ died." 1 Cor. 8. 11.

The message sent from the council imported that the Gentiles who should become Christians were not bound by the observances of the Jewish law. But at the same time they were to abstain from four things, of common practice amongst the heathen, and particularly obnoxious to the Jews. And these are here called "necessary things;" though only two out of the four were of moral obligation. The other two were made important to the Jews, by the regulations of the law of Moses; wherein blood was forbidden for the food of man, because it was by blood, the blood of Christ, that atonement would be made for the sins of men. Thus neither blood, nor things strangled, which had their blood in them, might be eaten by the Jews. And thus as long as the Jews were likely to be scandalized, by seeing such things eaten amongst Christians, it was necessary that Christians should abstain from eating them. For that is necessary which God commands. And there is nothing which He has commanded more expressly, than that we should deny ourselves for our brother's sake, and desire in all things to edify each other.

At the reading of this epistle, we are told of the Gentile converts, that "they rejoiced for the consolation." They were thankful for the liberty imparted; although there were still some points withheld, still some things enjoined, of which they might not straightway see the necessity or use. How different was this joy of theirs from that pride, presumption, and discontent, which make many in their differences count nothing gained, till they have wrung from their opponent all they seek for! How different from that temper which makes some murmur against God, however many be the blessings He bestows, if He withhold from them some one on which their hearts are set! He gives health, but if not wealth also, they rejoice not. He gives health and wealth; but takes from them a friend, or child. They refuse to be comforted. He leads them, like the blind, by a way they know not. He guides them to eternal life and joy, by withholding from them pleasures which would end in ruin, or connexions inconsistent with their peace. Oh, why will they not rejoice in the consolation? Why will they not be thankful for the grace which He still offers, for the heaven which He still opens to their perseverance and their prayers?

God grant that whatever blessing He bestows, or whatever He for a time withholds, we may in either case alike rejoice in hope, and be glad in the conviction that He does all for good!

Paul and Barnabas depart asunder.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see*

how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

§ 404. *The duty of being reconciled.*

How pleasant has been the fellowship of Paul and Barnabas, as set forth in this history of the Acts of the Apostles! How did it help them to labour in the work of the ministry, encourage them to bear patiently their common persecution, and enable them to hold fast the profession of the truth! How should it move us all to work together in love, for the truth's sake, in danger defending one another, in honour preferring one another! And how should the separation which ensued between these two servants of the same Lord, be an urgent warning unto us not to differ, or contend, or quarrel with each other!

The contention here related has been found to be a scandal unto many, who consider not sufficiently for what intent it is that Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. They are surprised at such weaknesses and sins in men, who are described as having been moved by the Holy Ghost. So much the more however, in the first place, we may be sure of the truth of Scripture itself. For how could the account of any one of mankind be just, if it represented him as free from sin? And again, how evident is it here, that the writer of this book cared not for what men would think of what he wrote, or at least did not so care, as to suppress what he must know would have an ill appearance! But further we may observe, that the being filled with the Holy Ghost, and endued with the power to work miracles, does not in the least imply that a man in his own person would be free from sin. It pleased God to put his treasures, as well as the ordinary office of a minister, in earthen vessels. See 2 Cor. 4. 7. It has been his method to make use of men that were still men, in all his measures for spreading abroad the Gospel in the world. And from the failings of the most eminent, amongst that goodly company, whose labours are recorded in the word of God, we may learn this important lesson, that there are no privileges so high, no gifts so great, as that they will secure any man from the risk of sinning. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10. 12. And let him also that falls, or has fallen, feel good hope that he will be again set upright. God is longsuffering to usward, and not willing that any should perish. He is not willing that any should despair. And if He has put it on record, in his book, that the most eminent of his saints have fallen into sin, this is in order that we might learn from their example to repent; this is in order that the worst of sinners may be aware, that it is not their having sinned which can shut them out of heaven, if only they have grace to repent in earnest, and effectually to amend their lives.

And that this was the case with Paul and Barnabas, that they repented of this very difference, we have evidence in the writings of the apostle. In his Epistles he seems to have taken pains to mention the names both of Mark and Barnabas, in proof of his being at peace with both of them. For thus he writes to the Corinthians: "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" 1 Cor. 9. 6. And to the Colossians he purposely makes mention of "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas." Col. 4. 10. And again to Timothy, as if to shew how much he now valued Mark's assistance; "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." 2 Tim. 4. 11. If then we have ever differences amongst each other; if, which God forbid, we ever fall out by the way; if we ever embitter by bickerings and strife the few and evil days of our pilgrimage on earth, let us make haste, whilst yet we have time, and be reconciled to our adversary. Let us study to make our adversary our friend. Let us rejoice to make public our renewed attachment, before those who have witnessed our separation. Let us bethink ourselves, how in our estranged condition God has condescended to be reconciled to us. And as we hope to be by Him forgiven, let us from our hearts forgive each other, immediately, entirely, for ever.

God give us the heart to agree with one another! And when we differ, God help us to be reconciled! The more we have been estranged, the more we have to forgive, or have need to be forgiven, God enable us the more to love!

St. Paul circumciseth Timothy; goeth to Philippi.

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, ¹ named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, ² that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to

go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is *||* the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

¹ Rom. 16. 21.

² Chap. 15. 28.

|| Or, the first.

§ 405. *The importance of a settled place for prayer.*

It was to the Timotheus here mentioned that the two Epistles were written, which we call the Epistles to Timothy. His mother "was a Jewess, and believed;" that is to say, believed in Christ. And it is plain that Timothy also was already a disciple before the arrival of St. Paul: for he "was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." This privilege of being a Christian he probably owed to the influence of his mother; for "his father was a Greek." And we may hence take occasion to observe, for how many of our first and best religious impressions we are most of us indebted to a mother's teaching. Happy are those sons, who like Timothy, abide by the instruction of a Christian mother! Happy are those mothers, who like the mother of Timothy, bring up their children in the way they should go, and live to see them walk therein!

As a Christian disciple, being the son of a Greek, Timothy was exempt from the obligations of the ceremonial law, according to the decision of the council at Jerusalem. And it was one object of St. Paul, in this journey which he took, to deliver to the churches in each city this decree of the apostles and elders. Yet because the mother of this disciple was a Jewess, the apostle, rather than scandalize the Jews, "took and circumcised him." And herein he acted on the spirit of the decree, whilst he seemed to neglect the letter of it. For the council had decided for the Christian converts, that they should for the present observe some things more than otherwise they needed, out of respect to the Jewish prejudices. And here the apostle further taught by his practice, that it is the same with this very decree of the council, and as we might in like manner argue, with all laws whatsoever: there are many things in which, though we are at liberty, it is well to act as if we were obliged. Things lawful, things not forbidden by law, are not always things expedient. Let us therefore look not only to the letter, but to the spirit of every law, which bears upon the case we have in hand. And however painful may be the duty to ourselves, let us do always that which is best for others, though it be more than seems literally enjoined.

In the course of the travels here mentioned, St. Luke, the writer of the history, appears to have joined company with St. Paul. For in the tenth verse of this chapter, after mentioning the vision which appeared to St. Paul, he speaks of himself as the companion of this intended journey, "we endeavoured to go into Macedonia." This form of expression running through the remainder of the book, may add somewhat to the interest with which we read what happened under the writer's eye. But it cannot, we should remember, add to the certainty of the things which he relates. For all parts of Scripture are alike surely true, being guarded from error by the hand of Him, whose eye seeth all things, and whose presence is everywhere.

At Philippi Paul and Silas, and their company, went out of the city, on the sabbath day, to a place "where prayer was wont to be made." And this is a good precedent for the respect which Christians usually pay to their accustomed places of divine worship. And it might help also in our private prayers, and in our family devotion, if we were to set apart in like manner for each a fixed place, as well as a fixed time. Where prayer is wont to be made, thither let us with joy resort. Where prayer is wont to be made, there let us devoutly pray, there let us hear attentively, there let us earnestly give thanks. For where prayer is wont to be made, there God is wont to hearken, there Christ is wont to intercede, there the grace of the Holy Ghost is wont to be bestowed, and his peace and joy to be shed abroad in our hearts.

St. Paul converteth Lydia ; casteth out an evil spirit.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us : whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit || of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying :

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And he came out the same hour.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope on their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the † marketplace unto the rulers,

20 And brought them to the magistrates saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them : and the magistrates rent off their clothes, † and commanded to beat them.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely :

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

|| Or, of Python.

† Or, court.

† 2 Cor. 11. 25. 1 Thessa. 2. 2.

§ 406. *What reflection we ought to make at the sight of prisoners.*

It is mentioned of this woman of Thyatira that she "worshipped God." She was a proselyte to the faith of the true Jehovah, though living in the midst of heathens and idolaters. This circumstance made her heart more ready to be opened, so as to believe what Paul preached. And this was an advantage which must frequently have arisen, from the wide extent to which the religion of the Jews was spread abroad, among the inhabitants of surrounding countries. There were by this means great numbers in some degree prepared to listen to the preaching of the Gospel, and likely in some degree, when they listened, to believe. But no preparation, we should observe, can be sufficient, without help from heaven in the soul. It is the Lord that must open the heart, even of those who know already how to worship Him, ere they can make any great progress in their devotion or their faith.

The mention of the damsel, "with a spirit of divination," serves to shew us that possession by evil spirits was allowed to take place, and to be manifest to the senses of the beholders, for some time after the ascension of our Lord. And there can be little doubt that this was ordered with a view to the more signal proof of God's interfering, in the recovery of those who were possessed. For no miracle was more likely to convince beholders that the power of God was at work, than when they saw it prevail against another kind of power, which they considered to be altogether beyond nature. And something like to this is the proof which we might now each of us have within ourselves, of the reality of God's gifts of grace. Not that on our praying we can be sure that diseases will be healed, but that we may be sure, if we pray in earnest against our sins, we shall have grace to leave them off, we shall have strength to do that which by nature we cannot do, to serve and love the living God. And what can more thoroughly satisfy us that we have the strength of God within us, than to find that we are actually prevailing against sin, and growing in holiness, and in a heavenly mind?

The masters of this damsel that had been possessed were so angry at the loss of their much gain, that they stirred up the people against Paul and Silas, and brought them to the magistrates ; who having first had them beaten, then cast them into prison. This was a severe trial of their faith and patience. To be treated as the worst of malefactors, to be confined in the inner prison, and to have their feet made fast in the stocks, this is nigh to the extremity of punishment which man can inflict on man, and which the word of God allows the magistrate to inflict, for preserving the peace of the community. But how often are the highest, and even the best of men mistaken in their judgment, as the magistrates were here ! How often are they that walk at large more worthy of the stocks, than they that are bound ! Let us reflect when we see a prison house, or hear of prisoners, let us reflect how very probably we ourselves may deserve worse both of God and of mankind, than some of those who lie there in durance. And still more let us think with thankfulness of Him, who when we were in the prison house of sin and death, came to open the doors of our captivity, and to give us, if only we prefer not bondage, freedom for evermore.

Lord, as Thou hast opened our prison doors, open also our hearts, that we may desire to be free ! Unbar in us the strong holds of pride, and selfishness, of desire, deceitfulness, and delay ! Enable us to attend unto the things which have been spoken by thy apostles in thy name ! Enable us to believe what from them we learn ; and what we know enable us to do !

Paul and Silas are delivered from the prison.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and

all his, straightway.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

40 And they went out of the prison,¹ and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

¹ Ver. 14.

§ 407. *What we must do to be saved.*

Whilst Paul and Silas lie awake with pain of many stripes, and with their feet fastened in the stocks, the keeper of the prison is at his ease asleep. But how short is the deceitful rest of them who sleep, but not in Christ, who wake from death, but not to rise with Him! How much to be preferred the watchings and the pains, the sickness, sorrows, or decease of those, who in the hour of their midnight agony can pray and sing praises unto God! No imprisonment of the body, no suffering which the world or the devil may inflict, must shake for one moment our faith in God, our persuasion that what He orders for us is always best, and our resolution to give Him constant thanks. From the lowest depths of woe to which He may have thought fit to bring us, from the prison house of adversity, affliction, or disease, of disappointment, despondency, or despair, let us but raise our voice to God, and thank Him for his fatherly correction, let us but make known unto Him by prayer our desires for help and comfort; the angel of the Lord, we may rely on it, will open for us, in the moment most for our good, the door of our captivity.

And see how different in this juncture was the behaviour of the heathen jailor from that of the Christian prisoners. The one, rather than meet the charge of having lost his prisoners, "would have killed himself." He knew no more of the value of life, he cared no more for the sufferings of those he had to leave behind. The apostle, on the other hand, when at liberty, thought not of himself, but of the afflicted jailor. The first words he uttered were the kind assurance, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Grief makes many selfish. Others seem to become selfish for want of knowing what grief is. But let us learn in either state of sorrow or of joy, to think more for others and less of ourselves, to feel more for their sorrows than for our own.

The jailor, converted by the miracle, asked how he might himself "be saved," how escape in that day when the foundations, not of the prison only but of the whole earth, should be shaken, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Let thy family also believe, and thy family also shall be saved. "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." They explained to him what was meant by believing, how it implied loving and living accordingly. And to this they added the ordinance of baptism. He "was baptized, he and all his, straightway." For so had our Lord instructed his apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28. 19.

And what a change was now made in this keeper of the prison! What a signal instance of God's mercy was his conversion! What a pattern for that conversion of heart, which we fear is still needed in many already pledged by baptism to serve the Lord! One hour he is the minister of cruelty to his prisoners, the next he has brought them into his house and has set meat before them. One hour he would have killed himself, rather than encounter the displeasure of man, the next, with the same displeasure threatening him, he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Oh let us seek that joy which comes of faith, and we shall never feel that shame which springs from fear. Let us be used to feed the hungry, and to wash the stripes of the oppressed, and we shall then never be inclined either to imprison or to beat, or so much as by an unkind word to provoke the temper, or to wound the heart.

St. Paul preacheth at Thessalonica and at Berea.

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews :

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas ; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city,

crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ;

7 Whom Jason hath received : and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea : who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed ; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

§ 408. *That we should search the Scriptures.*

At Thessalonica there was a synagogue of the Jews, in which St. Paul for "three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." This, we are told, was "as his manner was." It was his practice then in every city to preach the Gospel, first to the Jews there resident. And to them he used to reason out of the Scriptures. He used to expound the writings of the Old Testament, for the New was not then complete. And from these Scriptures he used to prove that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that the same Jesus whom he preached was the Christ. This is a kind of evidence not so striking perhaps to us as to the Jews, for whose sake it was employed. For to them these were the only Scriptures ; and they were accustomed to study them with earnest care. And they lived at the time when the things spoken of had happened, so that they could see more forcibly how all was fulfilled. But to us also there is no slight degree of proof in the fact that they believed, even some of the Jews themselves, "and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." For these were all of them persons most unlikely to change their religion on insufficient grounds. And their believing may therefore the more convince us that they believed with reason, and that our faith is not vain.

And yet we must be aware that there were many which "believed not." There were many who were "moved with envy." There were many whose evil passions made them deaf to all persuasion, blind to all light of truth. And this is the case with every question that can be proposed to the assent of a reasonable creature. Some agree, and some refuse to hear. Some believe, and some believe not. But when we see those believe, who by believing must do violence to pride and prejudice, and gain only loss unto themselves, we can hardly doubt that they have strong ground for believing. Whilst the unbelief of those, whose unbelief costs nothing, and who by believing would seem to lose every thing, affords none of the like presumption that unbelief is reasonable.

And now let us see what these unbelievers objected : "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also." This was the whole complaint of the unbelieving Jews. And how truly in these words did they describe the very glory of that Gospel which they sought to disparage ! How great was its force in turning men from idols to serve the living God ! How mighty is its influence in the heart, to pull down the strong holds of pride and passion, of selfishness, deceitfulness, and lust ! How powerfully has it in fact prevailed over the most enlightened nations of the earth, and in the minds of the most enlightened of mankind ! And how has it prevailed ? By outward force ? Far from it. A few poor fishermen were the conquerors. Was it then by suppression of research and reasonable inquiry ? Behold the Bereans are commended for searching daily in the Scriptures, those of the Old Testament, to see whether the things were as St. Paul had preached. Let us then endeavour by study, by prayer, and by practice, to know whether these things are so. When we read of the blessedness of a holy life, let us try to be holy, and by being so, let us try whether it be not best for us thus to be. Let us try, and search, and prove, whether faith in Christ, and love of God, and a kind concern for all our fellow creatures, be not, as the Scriptures say they are, the way of peace on earth, as well as of everlasting joy in heaven. One half of this we may prove whilst yet we live. For the other we must wait, till death shall put an end to all that here we do, to all that here we are. But if at present we find happiness to be the fruit of holiness, how strong is the presumption that it will be so in the end, how urgent is the motive thus pressed upon our hearts, to hold fast that which is good !

St. Paul is sent from Berea to Athens.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge, that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city *||* wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagoge with the

Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this *†* babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto *‡* Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

|| Or, full of idols.

† Or, base fellow.

‡ Or, Mars' hill. It was the highest court in Athens.

§ 409. *The folly of always looking after news.*

The Jews of Thessalonica seemed to have spared no pains persecuting those who spread abroad the word of God. They followed St. Paul to Berea, and there also "stirred up the people." We might hence derive a lesson in point of zeal, towards assisting, encouraging, and maintaining those who now preach the Gospel to the heathen. How gladly should we help, by all means within our reach, to make known to others those glorious tidings which we feel to be the foundation of our own only hope, that we shall escape the wrath to come! How should we watch the progress of saving truth from city to city, from land to land! And how would it help to make us more highly value that truth which we have ourselves long known, if we were diligently engaged in making it known to others, in helping and praying that they might profit by it for ever!

But see how easily the malice of mistaken men is directed by God's providence to a profitable use! Whilst St. Paul was driven from Berea, Silas and Timotheus for a while stayed behind. So that the Gospel was preached in two places instead of one; and this other, namely Athens, to which St. Paul was driven, was one of the most important of all cities in which it could have been heard. For this was a place, the most celebrated of all others in the ancient world, for a kind of learning which they called philosophy. And this meant a diligent inquiry into the best means of human happiness. So that the philosophers, who were now to hear St. Paul, were people who professed to study what would most help a man to live a happy life, and to die a happy death. Now these were the very things which the apostle desired to teach. And it was well that he should have those to hear him, who were no strangers to the subject, and who had tried all other methods with little prospect of success.

For that the skill of these philosophers had failed, that they had been unable to make wiser those with whom they dwelt, may be collected from this single fact, that the city was "wholly given to idolatry." Even the city which had been long counted for the fountain of light to the most enlightened nations of the earth, the city to which both Greeks and Romans resorted for instruction in all manner of knowledge, this city was "wholly given to idolatry." The streets and public places, and private houses also, were filled with idols. And the rites and ceremonies of religion consisted in sacrifices and prayers and thanksgiving, all offered to idols instead of God. God be praised that in this Christian land, we have been delivered from a sin to which nations in all ages have been almost universally inclined! God grant that being free from outward idolatry, we may cherish no idols in our hearts!

The Athenians besides idolatry were guilty of another kind of folly, most inconsistent with true philosophy, and injurious to the welfare and happiness of the soul. They "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." This love of what is new and strange, this delight in telling of it, hearing of it, reading of it, is a bad symptom in whatever age or country it prevails, in whatever heart it is established. It encourages a man in indolence by the semblance of activity, entertaining his mind, whilst his hands lie idle. He gets accustomed to read of misery without considering that he ought to be relieving it. And the woes which ought to agonize his heart with sympathy, minister rather to the amusement of his mind. God grant that our interest in news may consist in a charitable anxiety, to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice! God grant that we may seek in all things, not so much what is new, as what is right, and just, and true! God grant that in religion, above all things, we may avoid new and strange doctrines, and ask rather for the old paths, see Jer. 6. 16, search for the faith once delivered to the saints, and abide therein unto the end. See Jude 3.

St. Paul preacheth at Athens.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of *¶* Mars' hill, and said, *¶* Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your *†*devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24 *¶* God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, *¶* as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, *¶* we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, *¶* whereof he hath *†* given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

¶ Or, the court of the Areopagites.

† Or, gods that ye worship, 2 Thess. 2. 4.

¶ Ch. 7. 48.

¶ Ps. 60. 8.

¶ Is. 40. 18.

† Or, offered faith.

§ 410. *The judgment to come.*

The Athenians, though enlightened in human knowledge, were like other heathens, lamentably ignorant in things divine. So that besides the many false and fabulous divinities, whom they vainly worshipped, they had an altar to one whom they called "the Unknown God." This they had for fear they should have left out in their catalogue any one of the many gods whom they supposed to be. And it amounted to a confession that they knew not what gods there were, though they were willing to worship any that they could hear of. St. Paul therefore assures them that he was able to reveal to them the Being whom they ignorantly worshipped. God, he signifies, is one, and one only. God is He who "made the world and all things therein." God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." God is not to be satisfied with mere outward sacrifices, as if He needed any thing that we have thus to give. God is Himself the Giver of life and breath to all things. God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." God has determined where each man should live, and when, so as for all to be tried, as seemed best to Him, whether they would feel after Him, and find Him, and do his will.

"In him we live, and move, and have our being;" and so St. Paul reminded them that one of their own poets had said, "we are also his offspring." Which saying served to prove to the Athenians, that men in the same condition as themselves knew more of God than to call Him "the unknown." And therefore by this knowledge, which they ought all to have attained, he exhorts them that they should no longer serve idols made of metal, stone, or wood, by the device and skill of man. For, however their past folly might have been overlooked, he warns them that God "now commandeth all men every where to repent." Are there then any present to whom God is still unknown? Is there a heart which has as yet not felt how great He is, how good, how sure to punish, how gracious to forgive? Behold, He commandeth you to repent. He would have you turn without delay from the idols you have served on earth, and give your soul unto the God of heaven. He is around you. He is within you. Or rather in Him you have your being. How dare you bow down to any other? How dare you love more than Him any thing that He has made? How shall you not immediately renounce the gods of your idolatry, and with a new heart and new mind serve the Lord who made and who redeemed you?

The grounds for such repentance, here insisted on, are these: "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." We die, but after death we rise again. We die, but there is after death the judgment. We shall be judged, called to account for all that we here do and say and think. We shall be judged in righteousness; by a righteous rule, every man according to his light and knowledge, and talents and opportunities. We shall be judged by that Man whom God has ordained; by One who as a Man died for our sins; by One who as God is able to forgive them. And that we shall thus rise again to be judged, we have this assurance, the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. The Judge is already again alive. And shortly we must follow. Through the grave and gate of death, by the sentence of our mighty Lord and Judge, we must enter, God only knows how soon, into happiness or misery without end.

Would that as we know who God is, and how great is his mercy to ourselves, would that we might feel thankful for his goodness, and careful to do his will! Would that in point of faithfulness, devotion, and obedience, we may never be estranged from Him, and He never be to us what He was to the Athenians, "the Unknown God."

St. Paul cometh to Corinth.

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth :

2 And found a certain Jew named ¹ Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla ; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome :) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought : for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, ² he shook his raiment, and said unto them,

Your blood be upon your own heads ; I am clean : from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 ³ And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house ; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace :

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee : for I have much people in this city.

11 And he [†] continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹ Rom. 16. 3.

² Matt. 10. 14.

³ 1 Cor. 1. 14.

[†] Gr. sat there.

§ 411. *That we ought not to fear.*

St. Paul had been brought up in Jerusalem, "at the feet of Gamaliel ; and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." Chap. 22. 3. He was carefully instructed in such learning as was in highest estimation among the Jews. And yet he had been taught the business of a tentmaker according to a custom which prevailed amongst his countrymen, that every one should learn some useful handicraft. We see then here that the following of any industrious trade is a fit employment for our time on earth. We see how it is practicable for a man to be engaged in an active business, and yet to be employed in winning others to the faith of Christ. Let those of us who have any worldly work in hand, be watchful to employ a due portion of our time, and thoughts, and means, to the teaching others what we know of Christ and of his Gospel more than they. By example, by edifying conversation, and by exhorting one another in every good word and work, let us persuade as many as we can, that Jesus is the Christ, and that it is good to be his faithful servants.

At the same time it must never be forgotten that there is a distinct office for ministers of religion, that there are men set apart to teach and preach, to administer the sacraments, and to preside in the congregation of the people. It is under their direction that the rest must labour. Into their proper duties the rest must not intrude. And for their support the rest must be glad to contribute ample means, that they may give themselves and all their time to the work of the ministry. It is indeed well for those who labour with their hands, to be ready also to edify with their words. And it is desirable, that those who are set apart for teaching, should be not above maintaining themselves, if needs must, by labour. Yet it is better that such need should be otherwise provided for. It is better, as St. Paul argues in his Epistle, written afterwards to these very Corinthians, because "so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Cor. 9. 14.

At Corinth, as in other places, St. Paul was violently opposed by the Jews. Whereupon, after having done all he could to persuade them, he warned them that their blood would be upon their own heads. And he declared that thenceforth, in that city at least, he should go unto the Gentiles only. This may remind those amongst us, who are tempted to delay repentance towards God, that there is a time at which our privileges will fail, when the voice of warning will sound in our ears less loudly, when the words of mercy will be less urgently pressed on our affections, when the Holy Spirit, who now strives with our spirit will strive either less powerfully or not at all. Surely on our own heads our blood will rest. We have no one to find fault with but ourselves. We must each feel within ourselves that we might have turned ere now ; or that we might now turn truly, if we would, to God.

In this emergency, the apostle was encouraged by a vision of the Lord in the night, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace : for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee : for I have much people in this city." This was a most seasonable assurance, when the Jews had proved themselves unfit for any further exhortation, and when St. Paul might have naturally feared that he should meet with few converts among the Gentiles. But often in cases which seem to us least hopeful, God designs to work more than ordinary good. Whosoever therefore we are most tempted to despond, either for our brethren or for ourselves, let us lay to heart the comfort which Christ offers in this text ; "Be not afraid." "I am with thee." And if He be with us, who can be against us ? Who can be so against us, as to prevail, if the Son of God Himself take part with us against those who are the enemies of our soul's salvation ? No, let us persevere as did St. Paul, who upon the strength of this assurance, "continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Let us persevere in whatever duty God has given us to do, not afraid, for Christ is with us.

Paul is brought before Gallio; goeth to Ephesus.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you :

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it ; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the

judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila ; having shorn his head in Cenehrea : for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there : but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not ;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem : but I will return again unto you, 'if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

¹ 1 Cor. 4. 10. Jam. 4. 15.

§ 412. *That we ought to care for all men.*

The temper of Gallio is no uncommon one. To care for none of these things is the disposition with which a great part of mankind regard matters of most importance to their eternal welfare. And it is painful to reflect how greatly this indifference is promoted by its being known that those who seem intent upon religious truth, often dispute vehemently about trifles. It is because we are apt to waste our time and thoughts, and also to violate our charity, upon words and names of least importance in our law, therefore many men are apt to doubt whether we are in earnest at all, in the weightier matters of the Gospel. Let us then for the future care less for trifles, and more for the great realities of our faith. Let us care less for words and names, and more for things ; less for questionable points, and more for those great doctrines which are generally agreed upon. Let us shew that our hearts are set on heaven, that it is our earnest care not to perish everlastingly, that it is the whole study of our lives to love each other, and to serve our Lord. And then how would the most indifferent be awakened ! how would the most thoughtless think ! how would the most careless care !

We have a vow ; let it be heard in our speech, let it be seen in our conduct ; we have a vow, and we must act as they who are pledged to God, who are bound by a most solemn obligation to devote their whole hours to Christ. Wheresoever we have to go, and how much soever we may be pressed to stay, we must consent to nothing which is inconsistent with our duty. We must by all means do that which God commands. We must at any cost of profit, pleasure, character, or convenience, avoid sin and follow after holiness. Let these feelings be ever uppermost in our hearts, let them be manifest in the conduct of our lives ; and we may then reasonably hope of the most negligent beholders, that they will see far more than they now do the necessity of caring for the soul.

Some however will not see in any case. Gallio cared not even for the preaching of St. Paul. And though he professed to despise the matter in dispute, as being a question of words and names, he shewed afterwards that he cared as little for things of evident importance, such as the beating of Sosthenes before the judgment seat. And thus it often happens that they who cover an indifference to religious truth under the pretence of being averse to controversy, are at the same time indifferent to justice and to humanity. For nothing can permanently secure a lively sense of the wrongs of others, and an active benevolence in redressing them, except true love of God, and true faith in Christ, and true desire to love all men for his sake. With this desire in our hearts we shall never fail to care, we shall never fail to feel deeply, and to act resolutely, when we see any one, or hear of any one, being beaten or oppressed, reviled, insulted, or in any way ill used. To be kindly affectioned towards each other, this is the Christian's rule. See Rom. 12. 10. This spirit, the very opposite of selfishness, makes us feel for each sorrow of our brethren, as deeply, as forcibly, as if it were our own. It makes us count for brethren the most remote in country, the most estranged in language, kindred, or religion. And however different from our own be the laws or customs, the habits or pursuits, the joys or sufferings, of those whom thus we love, our charity constrains us, or rather inclines us of ourselves, to care for all these things, even for all things which can befall any one whom God has made, any one for whom Christ has died.

Only let us never so care for our brethren, as to forget that before all we must love our Lord. However earnest be their desires, we must by all means prefer to theirs the pleasure of our Father which is in heaven. And when we engage to comply with their requests, it must be always with this reserve implied, "if God will."

St. Paul strengtheneth the disciples. Apollos preacheth.

22 And when he had landed at Cæsarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the

baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

¹ 1 Cor. 1. 12.

§ 413. *That all Christians are in some sort ministers.*

St. Paul had answered the Ephesians, when they desired him to stay, that he “must by all means keep the feast at Jerusalem.” Ver. 21. And here we read of his landing at Cæsarea, and going up. By which is meant that he went up to Jerusalem, and kept the feast. This renders it probable that the Christian festivals which we now observe were sanctioned by apostolic practice. For the Christians who kept the passover at Jerusalem were well aware that Christ was their passover, see 1 Cor. 5. 7, and must have celebrated at that season not only the rites ordained by Moses, but also a thankful remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore gladly set apart in each year the time appointed by the church, for calling to mind the chief facts in the history of our Lord, and in the Gospel which He gave to be our guide unto salvation. Let us be thankful both for the things which happened, and for the ordinances by which they are kept fresh in our remembrance, to our great and endless comfort.

Of Apollos it is recorded that he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures. This shews us that the gifts of learning and of natural ability were of use and honour in the service of the Gospel, even whilst the preachers of it were in many things miraculously endowed. Much more therefore now, when we have miracles no more, much more should the best of human faculties, and the best of human learning, be devoted to teaching diligently “the things of the Lord.” But in order to success, there must be added to these abilities and acquirements, there must be added that they who teach should be what is here called fervent in spirit. And therefore as we are expressly taught to pray for ministers of the Gospel, let us pray that God may make those we pray for, both eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, both fervent in spirit, and acquainted with the way of God perfectly.

Here we see further how all Christians may be in some sort ministers. For all may, like Aquila and Priscilla, expound to their neighbours, acquaintances, and friends, what they know of the way of God themselves. And let us note, for our encouragement in so doing, how this labour of love in Aquila and Priscilla redounded to the comfort of many others, to whom Apollos was afterwards of use. In Achaia he “helped them much which had believed through grace; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” Who shall say then, in the multitude of connexions which bind us to each other, who shall say how large might be our influence for good, if only we would diligently improve each offered season for speaking a good word in behalf of Christian truth? What we say may be the means of moving others, whose words may again move the faith and awaken the love of many more. Gentiles and Jews also in distant lands may thus profit to a degree we little think of. And the most humble and lowly Christian, who watches out of love to say what may minister grace unto the hearers, may be counted in the world which is to come for one of those who “turn many to righteousness.” Daniel 12. 3.

Only there is great caution needful, and great warning is afforded by the instance of Apollos, lest the zeal of individuals exceed the bounds of order, and minister not to the prevalence of truth, but to the increase of a spirit of party. “One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos;” 1 Cor. 3. 4; this was the error of the Corinthians, amongst whom these great teachers ministered. This is an error into which many are often tempted to fall, either by their own perversity, or by their teacher’s pride. Let us therefore hold stedfastly to this one profession, I am of Christ. Let us teach Him only, and learn only Him. Let us honour teachers for his sake, receive them in his name, and obey in them that authority which comes of Him. And whereinsoever we ourselves are teachers, let it be the earnest desire of our hearts to magnify not ourselves, but Him, and to promote his honour by the suppression of our own.

The Holy Ghost is given to the disciples at Ephesus.

1 And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, ¹ John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

¹ Matt. 3. 11.

§ 414. *What we must believe of the Holy Ghost.*

The disciples at Ephesus had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghost. And upon their saying thus St. Paul replied, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" For had they been baptized as Christians, they would not only have heard that there was a Holy Ghost, but would have been baptized in his name. Whereas they had been baptized only "unto John's baptism." And therefore the apostle explained to them, that John's baptism was designed to prepare men by repentance for believing in Jesus Christ. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Here then we see the importance of Christian baptism, the importance of being baptized as Christ ordained, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matth. 28. 19. This ensures that we shall at least be informed that there is a Father, that there is a Son, that there is a Holy Ghost. And further it makes it probable, that we shall feel how deeply we are bound to believe and do, according to what then was promised for us. Happy are they whose baptism is straightway followed by the gifts of the Spirit, who listen to the apostle's teaching, and profit by his powerful persuasion, in "the things concerning the kingdom of God."

Let us then put to ourselves this question of St. Paul, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" He meant it of such gifts as prophecy and tongues, things needful at that time for establishing the Gospel. We may apply it to the Spirit's influence on our hearts, to his moving us unto holiness and love. "Since ye believed." We profess to be believers now. And in some sort we were made to be believers, when we received the Holy Ghost at baptism. But have we received the Holy Ghost since we believed? Have we found in our hearts the testimony of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit? Should we find them if we were to examine now? They are, as St. Paul has told us, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. 5. 22, 23. Are these fruits now in our hearts? Are they manifested in our lives, in our words, in our thoughts? Or might we not in some cases almost truly say, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost?"

Into his name we have been baptized. In Him we profess our firm belief: I believe in the Holy Ghost. But do we believe? What then do we believe? Let us note what it is that we ought to believe, that for the future we may know better and believe more. We ought to believe that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and from the Son; see John 15. 26; that our Lord Jesus Christ sent Him to be our Comforter, to abide with us for ever; see John 14. 16; that He helps our infirmities; see Rom. 8. 26; that He makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; see Rom. 8. 26; that He bears witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God; see Rom. 8. 16; that He teaches us to cry, Abba, Father; see Rom. 8. 15; that He sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God; see Rom. 5. 5; that He makes our bodies a temple for Himself; see 1 Cor. 6. 19; that He works in us his manifold gifts, dividing to every man severally as He will; see 1 Cor. 12. 11; and that to Him as well as to the Father and to the Son there should therefore be glory in the church, which is in Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. See Eph. 3. 21. We must be aware we cannot believe in Christ, and come to Him, by our own reason, and strength, and might. But of the Holy Ghost we must believe, that He enlightens us by the ministry of the word; sanctifies and preserves us in the true faith of Christ, and in the right practice of his will; helps us to love each other, to bear with each other's infirmities, and to have peace and joy in believing. To Him then let us offer praise and thanksgiving; to Him let us devoutly pray.

Holy Spirit, direct and rule and guide our hearts! Let no sin reign in our mortal bodies, that we should fulfil the lusts thereof! Make us to be temples worthy of thy presence, casting out each evil spirit that would defile the soul! Help us to be holy as Thou art Holy! Help us to be pure as Thou art pure!

The exorcists are put to shame.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

§ 415. *Good brought out of evil.*

The miracles here reported of St. Paul are called "special," being in some measure distinct from any that have been before recorded. And this variety of miracles might probably be intended to suit the various dispositions of mankind; some persons, as we still see, being struck by one kind of proof, and some by another. And in these "special miracles" there was a propriety at that time, because what was done was neither more nor less than what the priests and prophets of false gods used then to pretend to do. It was well therefore to shew that the apostle of Jesus Christ could actually do the very things to which these false teachers made pretence, and which the people were accustomed to consider as a proof of more than human power. For truth might be thus more profitably compared with falsehood, idolators more powerfully convinced, and the reign of Satan in a corrupted world be more speedily and signally overthrown.

Here we have an account of some of the pretenders to supernatural power. Exorcists they were called. That is to say, they professed to cast out devils. And they were Jews of the number of those who were dispersed among the heathen. And these having some knowledge of the true Jehovah, were more likely to be regarded, and to regard themselves, as qualified for casting out evil spirits. But how great was their mistake in thinking that by the mere name of Jesus uttered, they could do all that St. Paul had done, whilst they were without the faith he had within his heart, or the gifts with which he had been entrusted! And how great must have been their wonder, when those who were possessed replied, at the suggestion of the evil spirit, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" In vain should we attempt to cast out of our hearts any evil spirit who there moves us to transgress, by merely repeating the words of prayer, whilst we neither desire those things for which we pray, nor believe that for Christ's sake they will be given us. In vain should we contend with Satan for the mastery, except by help of the Holy Spirit of God. Else must we expect, like these exorcists, to be overcome by our spiritual adversary. Else may we be sure that our resistance will end only in the more utter subjection of the soul.

The tidings of this discomfiture of the exorcists caused a fear to fall on all, and the name of the Lord Jesus to be magnified. It brought also into discredit these pretended curious arts, and made converts of many who used to practise them. They "brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." Have we then books which lead us into sin? Have we instruments of iniquity, or implements of any art or trade which conscience will no longer allow us to make use of? Let us not sell them for others to possess, let us not say within our hearts, that with the price of these we might buy what we may safely use. Let us not reason that others will be sure to sin, whether we minister the opportunity or not. But let us burn, or otherwise destroy what we dare no longer use ourselves. And if we count the price, let it be not to measure what we gain, but what we gladly lose for Christ's sake.

"So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." By the ignorance and perversity of the exorcists the falsehood of their whole system was exposed. The books were burned. The price was counted. And God, who out of evil can still bring good, made the fault and folly of these Jews the means of bringing glory to the Gospel. And this, we doubt not, is the case with all the evil, which we see around us in the world, or which we feel in our own proud and wilful hearts. There is no sin we can commit, and God shall not turn it to some good end, either for the benefit of man, or for his own glory. But does this make it to be the less sin in us? Far from it. Sin it is, because God has forbidden it. It is that which brought death into the world. It is that which cost the death of Christ. It is that, which if we persist in doing it, will compel us in the last day, and in the presence of the assembled world, to flee naked and wounded before our enemy.

The Ephesians are set against St. Paul by Demetrius.

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great

goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

§ 416. *The sources of practical unbelief.*

This history gives us some insight into the many kinds of opposition which the Gospel at first had to encounter, and over which it so signally prevailed. The most enlightened nations of the world, as they were then generally esteemed, and as we still acknowledge them in many points to have been, these people, so eminent in arts, so studious in philosophy, were notwithstanding beguiled by the worship of vain idols, gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone. And this worship, besides the strength of custom, was connected with their feelings of pride and patriotism. Each separate nation had some one god or other, whose name, attributes, and imaginary favour, served to swell their own weight and reputation. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion." And further, their interest, no less than their pride, was deeply concerned in the established worship. Many persons were engaged in the craft of making images, as well as in the service of the several temples. These easily prevailed on their relations and friends, and as we here see, on their fellow citizens, to take part against a religion which would spoil their trade. Yet the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. See ver. 20. It prevailed so as to be very generally acknowledged for the truth throughout the chief of these idolatrous nations.

What a victory this was we might more easily conceive, if we were to fix our attention on one point only, and observe how great a hinderance to the prevalence of truth the love of wealth still is. For though all, or nearly all, profess belief in Christ, it cannot be denied of very many that they live the life of unbelievers. And what is it which mostly hinders them from adopting true religion in their hearts? What is it which makes them put off their amendment, or in other words, persevere in their impenitence? Is it not that repentance would cost too much, would require them to renounce what they cannot bear to part with, either an unlawful calling, or unlawful gains made in a lawful calling?

Certainly no small stir would arise in any city, where on a sudden the whole Gospel truth should be at once faithfully preached, and faithfully practised. How many would have to give up their whole business at once! How many trades, which minister to mere vanity, must at once be utterly renounced! How many fortunes, which are swollen by pampering the most gross excesses, must straightway cease to be amassed! How many lands and houses gained by fraud or by oppression, must be restored, if it were possible, to the poor! Many books must be closed, if not absolutely burnt; many arts no longer practised; many sports forsaken; many joys renounced; many sights visited no more. These are the chief things which make men now reluctant to believe, reluctant to act as real believers. "By this craft we have our wealth." By thus refusing to believe we save a liberty to enjoy the pleasures of the world, which true faith would constrain us to renounce. "By this craft we have our wealth." This men often feel, when the truth is forced on their attention. "By this craft we have our wealth." This is the answer often given, almost in as many words, to the urgent exhortation of the Gospel, that we should renounce all which Christ forbids. I cannot give up this trade, it is so gainful. I cannot cease to traffick on the Lord's day, for I make more on that day than on any other. I cannot decline this pressure of worldly business, which prevents me from attending to my eternal interests. For it is by means of these manifold engagements that I am amassing a splendid fortune. These are the current arguments of practical unbelief. Nor can any thing prevail against this sordid reasoning, but a preference for the treasures of eternity; a conviction that there is no gain this world offers, no splendid fortune this world contains, which is worthy for one moment to be compared to the riches of God's mercy in his Son our Lord.

The tumult of the Ephesians allayed by the magistrate.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is † a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken

against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, ‖ the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a * lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

† Gr. the temple keeper.

‖ Or, the court days are kept.

* Or, ordinary.

§ 417. *How we must appease the storm of passion.*

This account of the assembly of the Ephesians shews us, how much a great portion of mankind are disposed to follow the few who are inclined to lead. "The more part knew not wherefore they were come together." Hence we learn how much it is our duty to endeavour to lead others for their good, how great would be our influence in leading them, if only we would sincerely try. The more part act they know not wherefore. They then who know what they ought to do, and why, should lead those who know neither, into the ways of truth. They should both teach others to do right, and explain the grounds of doing right. And this consideration should further put us on our guard, that we be not led so easily and with so little reason, as we are naturally apt. For as no man ought to go into an assembly, of which he knows not why they are met together, so neither ought one to go into any company, where one is more likely to be led for evil than to lead for good.

The Jews put forward Alexander to speak in their behalf, lest it should be thought that they were the cause of the tumult. For as St. Paul was a Jew, and as the Gospel in each city was first preached to the Jews, it might probably be thought that they chiefly were concerned. And in truth their own doctrine, as they were Jews, was no less inconsistent than that preached by St. Paul, with all the practices of idolatry. So much the more should they have been willing not to shift the charge upon the Christians, but to share with them the duty and the risk of preaching against idol worship. In any case of danger, especially when that danger is incurred for the sake of truth, let us be more anxious to defend our brethren, than to excuse ourselves. Let us be willing to take up the cross of Christ; who suffered in our behalf, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us nigh unto God. See 1 Pet. 3. 18. Never are we more near in likeness unto Him that ruleth over all, than when we risk our own safety, ease, or gain, in order to ward off evil from our brethren, to rescue the oppressed, to defend them that are reviled, or to maintain the cause of the fatherless and the widow.

The chief magistrate of the city first appeased the people, made them quiet, so as to listen to his words. He then induced them, by reasons of sufficient weight, to return peaceably to their homes. How he first appeased them is not mentioned. But we may conclude that it was by means of his office as a magistrate, and by the respect which was paid to his authority. This shews us one great use of such authority, entrusted as it is to lawful magistrates for the common welfare. For till peace can be first obtained amongst a multitude, the voice of reason is lifted up in vain. And what can be more frightful than assembled numbers, under the influence of ill directed passions, ready to tear to pieces them that speak for good? When violence takes place of reason, when justice is set at nought, and mercy forgotten in the prevalence of wrath, what can be more terrible than man to man?

Like to these also are those tumults in our own hearts, which grief or passion are too apt to raise. Whilst they last, in vain is reason urged on our attention. In vain do we ourselves urge upon ourselves reasons and resolutions oftentimes before reviewed, and reviewed in vain. First we must be appeased. First the storm of passion must be laid. And for this we must apply to some one higher than ourselves. For this we must apply to Him who has authority. For this we must ask in prayer of God, that He will be pleased to give us quietness and peace. In the midst of such commotions, may God make us ever sensible, that for these things we must expect to be called in question! May God help us, when we pray for his assistance, and help us also to be inclined to pray! May God remind us, the very next time our pride is mortified, our hope disappointed, our anger stirred, or any evil passion roused within our hearts, that it is from Him alone that we must look for peace, and that when we cannot reason we yet might pray!

St. Paul preacheth at Troas.

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the dis-

ciples came together ¹ to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹ Ch. ii. 46.

§ 418. *The necessity of watchfulness in hearing.*

Seven persons who accompanied St. Paul from Greece into Asia are here mentioned by name. And this mention of names served for reference when first the history was published, whilst it was likely that many of these persons would be alive. It could easily be learnt of them, or of their friends, by Christians in any of the neighbouring countries, whether they did thus accompany the apostle, and whether they knew of the things here set down as having happened in their presence. And further this serves to make the history more interesting to us, as well as the doctrines and duties with which it is connected; when we are reminded, by the mention of these early converts, that they who beheld the miracles which were wrought, and believed the Gospel which was preached, were men of like nature with ourselves. And thus also we do well to mention by their names, those for whom we pray in the congregation of the church. Whether it be for the sick that we intercede, or for kings, and them that are in authority, our attention is more fully directed by this method to those in whose behalf we pray; and our hearts are more likely to be affected, so as to pray with faith and love.

Such we doubt not were the prayers of the early Christians, often put up for one another by name, at their assemblies for public worship. And of these assemblies we here learn that they took place on the first day of the week; that is to say, the first according to the reckoning of the Jews, the day which we call Sunday, or the Lord's day. This was the day on which the disciples came together to break bread, to celebrate the communion of Christ's body and blood. How probable does it hence appear that these primitive Christians passed no single week without thus celebrating on the first day of it, the thankful remembrance of the death of Christ! This was the day on which St. "Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." What earnestness did such long preaching manifest in the apostle! What zeal in them that listened! What a lesson to us not to limit either our speaking or our listening for good, to such stated days, or short intervals, as are commonly considered to be enough! What a proof that on due occasions, and on a subject of so deep concern as that on which St. Paul discoursed, it would well become the preacher to speak till midnight, and the hearers to be glad to listen!

But let us take heed how we hear. Let us watch, lest whilst we listen to the word of God, we suffer the weakness of the body, or the enemy of the soul, to beguile us into sleep or inattention. It was after listening for many hours, it was at midnight, that Eutychus fell into a deep sleep. It is at midday, and during a discourse of scarce half an hour, that many hearers are now found to slumber. What would be their condition, if whilst thus they are asleep, they were to fall down, and be taken up dead? With no apostle at hand to embrace them, and restore their life, with no moment for repenting of this their latest sin, with no pause between the act of irreverence to God, and the summons to the judgment seat of Christ, who must not tremble to think it possible that he might in this way breathe his last?

May God make us watchful when we hear his word that we listen with all our power! * May God make us anxious to be instructed by them whom He has sent to preach! May God guard us whilst we sit to hear, that we be not overtaken by sleep or death! May God save us, whilst we listen wide awake, from that fearful lethargy of the soul, which makes us dead whilst yet alive, and which when we die is death eternal!

St. Paul sendeth to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions shall abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

|| Or, wait for me.

§ 419. *The foundations of Christian doctrine.*

St. Paul we see was anxious to be at "Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." This might be partly because of the number both of Jews and Christians, whom he was likely to meet there at that time. And partly, we may suppose, his anxiety to be there arose from a wish to keep the Christian festival, which we still celebrate at the same period of the year. For it was on the day of Pentecost that the gift of tongues was first vouchsafed to the apostles. And there is no doubt that this manifestation of the Spirit has been commemorated ever since, at the same season, in the Christian church. Let not us then neglect to observe either this or any other holy day, appointed to help us in remembering the chief facts of the religion we profess. For the birth and for the death of Christ, for his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, for these things, and for the gift of the Holy Ghost, let us be thankful that there are appointed seasons, which may help to keep them in our remembrance.

Though St. Paul would not stop to call at Ephesus, he was not willing to pass that district without a parting admonition to the elders of the church there planted by himself. He therefore sent for them to come to him at Miletus; and there addressed them in terms most full of comfort and encouragement to Christians of every age and country. He reminded them how diligently he had taught amongst them, how he had kept back nothing that was profitable unto them. He told them that he was now going "bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem," meaning, that he knew by the Spirit that he should there be cast into bonds. But chiefly he insisted on those points of doctrine which had been most prominent in his ministry amongst them. And in his teaching we here see that "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," were set forth as of the first importance. And afterwards he added, as another important part of the ministry, which he had received of the Lord, that it was "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." By which expression he intended both God's mercy in forgiving, and his goodness in continuing to help those whom He forgives. These then should be the first and foremost matters in the ministrations of the Christian pastor. These should be at the foundation of our own notions in religion, of what we think and feel, believe and do. Not our own good works, but repentance from our sins, faith in our Saviour Christ, reliance on his merits, and confidence in the help of the Holy Ghost, these form the chief testimony of the apostle. On these it is indeed our urgent duty, and it must be our perpetual delight, to build up also holiness of life. But the foundation must first be laid aright, or the building will be neither safe nor serviceable.

Let us then be first convinced of sin. By careful study of God's holy word, let us learn how far we are from what we ought to be, how far from what He would have us be, how far from what He would help us to become. Next let us feel sorry for our misdoings, grieved at having offended God, shocked to think how ill we have requited the love of our Saviour Christ. Thence let us proceed to hate the sins we used to love, and to love the holiness which we used to hate. And as we can make no progress in this Christian course without frequent and earnest prayer, let us pray with the most firm persuasion that for Christ's sake our prayers are heard, our sins are forgiven, and that through the power of his atonement we have henceforth grace to live unto Himself, and when we die to partake of his inheritance. And what would then move us from the doing of our duty? What should we then count too dear unto ourselves, to be sacrificed for the sake of Christ? What should we then aim at in this present world, but to finish our course with joy?

St. Paul concludes his address to the elders at Miletus.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified:

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

1 Cor. 4. 12. 1 Thess. 2. 9. 2 Thess. 3. 8.

§ 420. *That it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

What a delightful testimony of a good conscience, was this which St. Paul uttered to the assembled elders, "I am pure from the blood of all men!" What an object for each minister of Christ to aim at, that he may never, by any neglect of his, become answerable for the sins of those who are committed to his charge! What a fearful consideration for each single Christian, that there is risk of our being so deeply implicated in the offences of each other, as that the blood of one can be on another's head! Never may we by our ill example draw in others to offend! Never may we fail to use the gift that is in us, for improving others to the utmost of our power! And if there be any within our reach who know not of God's counsel, revealed in the Scriptures, for their eternal good, never may we shun to declare to them, what it has pleased Him to make known unto ourselves! To be afraid, or shy, or silent, is in such a case not only most unkind to them, but most perilous to ourselves. For whatever may be the grounds of our reluctance, however deeply we may apprehend our own deficiencies, yet if we know "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," Tit. 2. 11, and tell not to our neighbour who is ignorant, how can we dare to say, how hope to feel, "I am pure from the blood of all men?"

St. Paul testifies that "by the space of three years" he had "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." This is the spirit in which we ought always to convey our Christian admonition to each other. How know we, for how seldom have we tried, how know we what would be the fruit of our advice, if we were to give it thus patiently, thus affectionately; if we were to repeat it without being wearied by former failure, and so as not to weary those whom we address; and if we were to prove by tears of heartfelt sorrow, unifying ourselves that we venture to advise our friends, but in order to save their souls from death? Let us set before our eyes a world lost in sin. Let us consider what St. Peter asks us, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4. 18. Let us remember how many risks even believers must encounter from men who speak "perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." And how could we then help to weep in earnest over the state of the unbelieving and impenitent?

At the end of his address St. Paul reminds the elders how he had supported himself, and them that were with him, by working with his own hands. Thus he had also helped to fix in their remembrance these most important words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But how different is this saying of our Lord from the ordinary discourse, and from the prevailing practice, of many amongst us, his professed disciples! Who that should listen to our common conversation, or should watch our daily works, who would not suppose it to be an acknowledged truth, that to receive is more blessed than to give? Why else do many take such anxious thought for what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewith they shall be clothed; whilst few take like pains to devise how they may best feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; few labour with like anxiety to bestow their alms, as they that must give account to a Master which is in heaven? Why else are we so reluctant to propose to one another occasions of Christian almsgiving? Why are we so apt to find excuses when such objects are proposed, however urgently to ourselves? We cannot surely in our hearts believe what the apostle has charged us to remember. We do not understand, or we will not be persuaded, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." When next we are invited to bestow our alms, when next it is our duty to invite our neighbours to partake in any charitable work, let us call to mind these striking words. And the more fond we are by nature of receiving, let us be assured, for they are the words of the Lord Jesus, that it is a more blessed thing to give.

St. Paul journeyeth towards Jerusalem.

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next day, we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophecy.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that oweth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered; What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

1 Ch. 6. 5*

§ 421. *The use of bearing crosses patiently.*

"After we were gotten from them," so hard it was for St. Paul and his companions to part from friends whom they so dearly loved, as the elders assembled at Miletus! So dearly ought we to love them who love our Lord, and labour in his work! So great pleasure ought we to take in their society! And yet so resolutely ought we to tear ourselves away, when our duty to our neighbour or to God requires it! How Christian friends might be beheld at parting we learn from what took place at Tyre: "We kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. To commend each other to the care of Him who is the Friend of all, to commend ourselves into his hands, as unto One whom above all we love, to kneel down as acknowledging his presence every where, and to pray as feeling that on all occasions his help alone can support and comfort us, these are the most fitting salutations for them who see God in every thing, this is the best Christian precedent for the parting of friends, whether our journey be from land to land, or from earth, as we hope, to heaven.

St. Paul during his voyage had many warnings that afflictions and bonds awaited him at Jerusalem. And he felt deeply for the sorrow which his friends expressed on the occasion. Nevertheless he persevered in his journey; and was willing not to be bound only, "but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." We are not required not to feel, nor not to feel deeply in affliction. "What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart?" are the words of one who was himself no less distressed than they to whom he spoke. He who elasters us for our good would not have us insensible to our chastisement. But whilst we feel it deeply, we must at the same time bear it patiently. We must be ready, however much we suffer, we must be ready to suffer more "for the name of the Lord Jesus." We must endeavour, whatever be our suffering, we must endeavour to make it tend to the glory of his name; by making the Gospel, through our patience, more known and valued, obeyed and loved.

And by no means can we more effectually make our light to shine before men, than by receiving cheerfully not only the greater afflictions of life, but also those smaller crosses, which we are daily called on to take up in the intercourse of each private family. How can we imagine that in St. Paul's circumstances, we should have been willing to be bound and to die for Christ, if we cannot now in our own case, whatever it may be, submit to the infirmities, put up with the ill tempers, of those with whom we dwell; and in the petty trials and troubles of domestic life bear each other's burdens? Let us in these, as well as in our more severe afflictions, repeat always contentedly the words of the disciples, "The will of the Lord be done." Let us be persuaded that it is his will, for our good; and that through his grace this trial of our faith will work patience and joy and hope. Let us watch that in each trial we may grow in grace, that grace, whether humility, meekness, or forbearance, whether readiness to forgive injuries, or to return blessing for a curse, that grace which the occasion seems most to offer, and which God, as we may hope, most designs to work. Let us feel that it is good for us to be thus tried each hour. Let us be glad that we have thus each hour opportunity, if not to die for our Lord yet to live unto Him. Let us endeavour so to live according to his will, and in the denial of our own corrupt affections, that we may be counted for his sake to die daily. See 1 Cor. 15. 31.

St. Paul cometh to Jerusalem.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Cæsarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

¹ Numb. 6. 18. Ch. 18. 18.

² Ch. 15. 20.

³ Numb. 6. 13.

§ 422. *The duty of concession.*

St. Paul on his arrival at Jerusalem was received by the brethren gladly. And when he told them, as his first glad tidings, "what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry," "they glorified the Lord." There was no longer amongst these rulers of the church at Jerusalem any jealousy of the Gentile converts. They rejoiced to find that those whom they used to count for lost, were now sought for and found of God. How greatly ought we also to rejoice, when we see those who have been strangers to faith and holiness, reclaimed from a profligate or worldly life, from a careless or unbelieving mind. There is joy in heaven over repentant sinners. And the nearer our hearts are to heaven, we shall welcome them more warmly to our own society, believing them to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The elders at Jerusalem had also to tell St. Paul how many thousands of Jews were become believers. "And they are all zealous of the law." This was the case with Jewish converts for many years. They conceived themselves still bound by all particulars in the law of Moses, and they held that all Gentile converts were bound likewise. Now it had been falsely reported of St. Paul that he taught the Jews who were dispersed among the Gentiles, that they ought not to circumcise their children; whereas he seems only to have claimed this exemption for the Gentiles, teaching the Jews that they were free either to circumcise or not. And therefore to remove this prejudice of the Jews, he consented to conform to their customs, in a matter of indifference, the paying the expenses of four men who had made a vow which would put them to some charge. Wherein he acted according to his own profession: "unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." 1 Cor. 9. 20.

Hence we learn how wrong it is to stand out for our own opinions in matters of comparative indifference. We see how cheerfully, when greater harm would arise from our refusal, we must consent to do that which might else be needless. This same apostle, as we know from his Epistles, was most zealous in maintaining that the Gentiles were not bound by the law of Moses; nor, nor the Jews either. But they were free to do what they were not bound to do. They were free to do themselves, what they were not free to impose upon their brethren. And this might be an useful rule for us in any questions of faith or practice, where we seem to hold more strict opinions than our neighbours. It is lawful for us to deny ourselves the amusements, or the gain, in question. It is lawful for us to impose upon ourselves a much greater amount of self denial, a much more hard task of duty, than we are at liberty to require of our brethren.

And further we may do well in such matters to exceed the measure which we should otherwise set ourselves in, in order to conform to the opinions of others. We must not, to please them, do less for heaven than we ourselves hold right. But we may profitably do more than we should otherwise, we may profitably yield somewhat from our own opinions on this safer side. For it is one thing to be firm in our adherence to the truth. It is another to stand up for it, as if we felt only for our own credit and consistency. Let us hold fast that which is good, for the sake of Him who is all truth, all goodness; and we shall be then ready, whilst we hold it fast, to recommend it by all reasonable concessions, and to adorn it by meekness, gentleness, and love.

St. Paul is taken by the chief captain.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him.

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

¹ Ch. 5. 36. This Egyptian rose.

§ 423. *Peace in the midst of strife.*

Do what we will to conciliate opposition, the froward will oppose themselves notwithstanding. The concession of St. Paul to the prejudices of the Jews required him to spend seven days in the temple. But before the days were ended, the very sight of him in this place stirred up their malignant passions, and they "went about to kill him." And thus it often happens, that the exercise of Christian principle in one party only makes more manifest in another the height of iniquity. And this is because of the deceitfulness of sin, because of the natural depravity of the heart of man. It is because of our enemy the devil, who is constantly going about "seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. Through these means it comes to pass that the things which ought most to move us to repent, if they fail, are most apt to harden us in sin. God grant that the forbearance we meet with in our brethren, may incline us not to encroach further, but more to yield, and more to bear with! God grant that the forgiveness we have experienced at his hands may lead us not to presume, but to reform, not to think that we may continue the more safely in our sins, but to be converted and sin no more!

And here we may do well to note the temper of St. Paul, the readiness with which he used in his protection all the peaceable means of reason and of truth. "May I speak unto thee?" are the first words he utters in the tumult, words of respectful application to the person in chief authority. "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus," is his next remark; by which he intimated that he was a citizen of Rome, and the more entitled to the protection of the captain. "Suffer me to speak unto the people." He desires to justify his conduct in their sight, if the captain would but secure a hearing. "He spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue." Having the choice, he prefers speaking in the language which is most likely to conciliate their esteem. Who then can doubt that it was no vain presumption, but a reasonable and settled conviction which animated his words and conduct? And if the facts to which he testified were such as he himself might have seen and heard and handled, who can question but that his evidence thus faithfully delivered, is sure and certain proof?

But lastly, let us from these proceedings take occasion to observe, how evenly the graces of the Gospel enable us to maintain our course through the troubles of the world, and through the disorders of our own affections. Let us compare the people, stirred up, crying out, running together, shutting up the doors of God's temple, and going about to kill the apostle, these things let us compare with the apostle's patience, his calmness, self possession, and consideration for his enemies. And let us remember that like to his should be our temper, like to his our behaviour under the assaults of violence, like to his our presence of mind, and self command, and self denial, in the most fierce onset of our most besetting sins. When provoked by insult, let us reply by reasoning. When endangered by rude or murderous assailants, let us still plead no more than, "Suffer me to speak." Though borne away by the tumult of a whole city in an uproar, let us be thinking all the while what will most make for peace. Or if it be in our own passions that the storm is stirred, let us desire still to speak to God in prayer, the language most acceptable unto Him, who alone can give rest unto our souls.

St. Paul makes his defence at Jerusalem.

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 ¹ I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

4 ² And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, ³ What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

¹ Ch. 21. 39.

² Ch. 8. 3.

§ 424. *The folly of kicking against the pricks.*

St. Paul opens his defence with the fact that he was a Jew. This is a point worthy of our remark; because it shews, that if he uniformly advocated the title of the Gentiles to the blessings of the Gospel, this was not for want of knowing and valuing the privileges of the Jews. And further, he had been "zealous towards God," in the same sense that the Jews were zealous, to such a degree as to persecute all Christians unto death. How happy was the apostle in being able thus to turn into an argument for the truth his own errors in time past! How watchful ought we to be, like him, that we may apply to the conviction of our brethren those sins by which we once helped to lead them astray. See, we ought to say, see from what I have been converted. Once I loved the world as you do now. Once I used to obey the lusts of the flesh. Now I am ashamed of my past offences, but I am not ashamed to own that I offended. I own with sorrow and contrition for myself, I own with deep remorse, to think that I may have misled others. But at the same time I testify with joy, how great is God's mercy in forgiving, how great has been my gain in being delivered from sin, and set free to serve Christ my Saviour.

From the account of what he was by birth and education, the apostle proceeds to tell of his conversion. Like the beast of burden, that kicks against the spur applied for his correction, the persecutor of Christ had resisted all evidence offered to his mind, by the miracles and preaching of the apostles, and by the patient endurance of wrong, which he met with in those whom he persecuted to death. The more he saw of those men, of whom the world was not worthy, he was only the more resolved to put them down. Like to his is the case of every man who wilfully shuts his eyes against the truth. Like to his is the case of every man who by any perversity or error of his own, fails to be convinced by the full means of conviction. Like to his is the case of every man who refuses to listen to what conscience whispers, or to profit by those events, which God in his providence dispenses, in order to move us to repent and to amend. If we are in pain, and will not learn to be resigned, this is "to kick against the pricks." The more we refuse, we must expect to suffer more, until we learn the lesson God designs to teach. If we are afflicted with loss of fortune, health, or friends, and will not acquiesce as God would have us, will not be content as He has bidden us, this also is "to kick against the pricks." And the more we thus resist we must expect to be afflicted more, unless God give us over to a reprobate mind. Is it not thus that we treat children of our own? When they disobey we punish. And if still they are refractory we punish more. And are not we as children in God's hand? And ought we not to thank Him for his goodness, in still bearing with us in our resistance, and giving us by repeated chastisement, renewed opportunity of submission to his will? Praised be his name, whether by affliction from without, or by the stings of conscience within, He goads us on from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven! Praised be his name, that He makes it hard for us to kick against the pricks, more hard, more painful, more full of misery, to sin than to repent, to resist than to obey, to oppose and doubt than to believe and love.

St. Paul is not suffered to finish his defence.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 ¹ And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined

by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have || examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

¹ Ch. 7. 58.

|| Or, tortured him.

§ 425. *The effect of the Gospel on the laws of the land.*

When St. Paul was told that he should be a witness unto all men, of what he had seen and heard, *sec ver.* 15, it was natural for him to feel that by reason of his former unbelief, and the ill treatment which he had heaped upon the Christian church, many would not receive his testimony. The Jews might indeed have hence reasonably concluded, that this apostle had sure evidence for the change of his behaviour. And the Christians ought to have rejoiced in his conversion, to have heard him without fear, suspicion, or distrust. But he was instructed by the Lord, whilst he was praying in the temple, that such would not be the fruit of his abiding in Jerusalem. What a mortifying reflection must this be to those who have once lived an unchristian life, that however deeply they may afterwards repent, the world so hardly gives them credit for repentance, the worldly minded will so hardly attend to the words of their advice, or to the force of their example! "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." This was the direction of our Lord to St. Paul in this emergency. And in a like cause any Christian might hence learn, that it would be better to change the place of his abode, than to dwell amongst a people to whom he could do no good. If after undergoing a change fit to be called conversion, we cannot by any measure of humility, forbearance, and moderation, suppress the scandal of our former unbelief or disobedience, let us depart far hence. Let us at all costs, as long as life endures, live where we may do honour unto our Lord, and help forward the salvation of our brethren.

When St. Paul mentioned to the Jews his commission to preach unto the Gentiles, they would no longer suffer him to speak. "They cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air." This was in token of the violence of their rage. And it shews us to what a height of madness men may come at last, who once give way to selfishness, jealousy, and pride. Let us then watch against that obstinate adherence to our opinions, which savours more of confidence in ourselves than of regard to truth. Let us hear readily, patiently, and attentively, those who offer to persuade us that we are wrong; desiring by all means in our power to be right.

The chief captain would have examined Paul by scourging, "that he might know wherefore they cried so against him." But against this degrading torture St. Paul pleaded that he was a citizen of Rome. For the Romans, who were at that time the masters of the world, gave to such as they called citizens many valuable privileges, and would by no means suffer them to be scourged. This distinction between freemen and other members of the state was no small hardship upon those who shared not the immunity. How different are the comparatively equal laws under which the greater part of Christians, in proportion to their light, have the happiness to live! How rarely amongst Christian nations is one part of the community exposed to any disgraceful punishment from which the other part is legally exempt! How much do we owe to the Gospel of our Lord for all that is just, and kind, and equal, in our laws! How much from the Gospel might we learn towards amending what is yet unequal, unkind, unjust! Let us be thankful that it has pleased Almighty God thus to rule the hearts of them that are in authority! Let us pray that He may henceforth prosper all their consultations, to the advancement of his glory and to the welfare of his church!

St. Paul pleadeth his cause before the council.

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, ¹Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, ²I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: ³of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 ⁴For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

¹ Exod. 22. 28.

² Phil. 3. 5.

³ Ch. 24. 21.

⁴ Matt. 22. 23.

§ 426. *A good conscience the way to be of good cheer.*

What a great thing was this for the apostle to declare to his assembled brethren: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day!" What an object for us to set before ourselves continually, in all that we ever do, or say, or think! Let us remember what conscience is: the voice of the inner man, which is enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit of God. This is the conscience of a Christian. This is what we resist, if we act against our conscience; this is what we follow, if we live in all good conscience; the Holy Spirit of God moving our hearts to that which is good. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth;" Rom. 14. 22; who allows not himself in any single action, which at the time he even suspects to be amiss. This is to live in a good conscience, if we never stifle that voice within us, which tells us, whether we will hear or not, tells us of all our actions, which be pleasing unto God, and which are hateful in his sight.

These words of the apostle provoked the high priest to order him to be smitten. Whereupon he was rebuked by St. Paul for giving this commandment contrary to law. And this rebuke was of the nature of a prophecy, a judicial sentence delivered by the prophet of the Lord, against the enemy and persecutor of the church. "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." A fearful warning this for all who abuse office and authority, who persecute or oppress their fellow creatures, instead of protecting their rights, property, and persons. A fearful warning this, not only for rulers in the state, but for masters or parents, in the treatment of their families, for brethren in their conduct towards each other, for servants in their behaviour to their fellow servants, for all who have others under them in any manner or degree; a fearful warning against the indulgence of that temper which would inflict an injury, or sanction the striking of a blow.

But this prophetic sentence was delivered by the apostle without design to bring into disrespect the high priest's office. "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest." In what I said I spoke not of his office, but of himself. I had no reference to his station, but only to his sin, in the words which I was directed to pronounce. Otherwise I am well aware that it is written, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." See Exod. 22. 28. This then is a precept of the Law, which the Gospel will by no means allow us to transgress. To speak evil of dignities is a sin. See 2 Pet. 2. 10. To talk disrespectfully of those who are in authority, to condemn their actions, to revile their persons; these are not idle words; or if they be, they are such as we shall be required to give account of in the day of judgment. Let it therefore be our endeavour to judge no man, to revile no man, to speak evil of no man, and above all, of no one of those amongst our brethren who hold office as rulers of the people.

St. Paul warded off the peril that encompassed him by dividing his enemies against each other. See herein how weak a multitude may be made by intestine discord! See how properly the best of men may use the means of human wisdom, when they are not inconsistent with Christian principle! See how graciously our Lord Himself approved of the apostle's conduct, and consoled him in the midst of his distress. "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." This comes of living in good conscience before God, that Christ bids us be of good cheer. He encourages us. He gives us his support. He has died to secure for us all needful help. He lives to intercede in our behalf. And if we will but live faithfully according to his will, He will make us to be of good cheer for ever.

The conspiracy against Paul is reported to Lysias.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves || under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him,

and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

|| Or, with an oath of execration.

§ 427. *How we ought to warn the unconverted.*

What a wicked vow was this, by which these forty Jews had bound themselves, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul! What a warning have we here against entering into any such vows, as we may not have opportunity to fulfil! On the one hand was murder, on the other perjury. Either they must take the apostle's life, or they must violate the vow which they had made, they must fall under the curse which they had wilfully provoked. Even in a good matter a vow before God is a thing rarely to be made, and never without being first well considered. And one chief thing to be considered is always this, whether the performance of it lie wholly within our reach. Though the object of these Jews had been not a wicked one, it must have been a wicked thing to make this vow, because they could have no security that they should be able to fulfil it. St. Paul might be delivered from their snare. And they must then either eat, or become murderers of themselves. Happy is it for us, that our vows, as we are Christians, though they embrace far more than we can do ourselves, are all put within our power by the grace of God. And happy are they who thus fulfil the obligations first laid on them in Christian baptism, and then renewed when they came to be confirmed. We are to put to death our lusts, we are to mortify our corrupt affections, we are neither to eat nor drink but by the rules of temperance and soberness; to these things we are bound as Christians. And of these things we must own, against ourselves, though not by way of censuring our brethren, cursed are they that do them not.

How easily was the malice of the conspirators foiled by the activity and courage of Paul's sister's son! How readily when we know any thing that might help a brother out of danger, ought we to come forward of ourselves, and to tell it for his good! How gladly ought we always to give information of evil, to those who are in station of authority to prevent it! False is the shame which ties our tongue, and cruel is the mercy which withholds our hands, if we know of wrong without exposing it, if we witness injustice, oppression, or deceit, and interfere not to uphold truth, and right, and justice. In such behaviour we forget that our forbearance, whilst it screens the guilty, and encourages them in sin, hurts those who are already injured, and deprives them of that help, which, if we were in their case, we should be thankful for ourselves. Let us do therefore as we would be done by. And whether it be for the rights of our neighbour, or what is nearly the same thing, for the laws of our country, that we have opportunity to give help or information, let us be forward to tell all we know, and to do all we can, towards exposing wickedness and upholding truth.

But chiefly, if we desire to prevent evil in the world, and to promote the growth of all that is most good, we should rejoice to spread abroad the tidings of salvation through Christ, we must endeavour to impress the truths of Christian doctrine on those who are lying in the prison house of sin, and in jeopardy of death eternal. Brother, we must say to such an one, I have a certain thing to tell thee. Thine enemy is going about seeking whom he may devour. He is lying in wait for thee, even for thy soul. He desires to have thee lost for ever. Watch therefore for thy life. Awake from sin. Have recourse to the great Captain of thy salvation. He alone can give thee safety, liberty. This message it is my duty to deliver. It is for thy sake that I deliver it. It is to save thee, if it be possible, from the pit of destruction. I gain nothing for myself, but am concerned for thee only. Or rather I gain every thing, if I should gain thee. If I should convert one sinner from the error of his way, I should be honoured as an instrument in the hands of God, to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins. See James 5. 20.

Lysias sendeth St. Paul to Felix.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of

their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they* had against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come, and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

§ 428. *How we ought to suspend our judgment.*

The young man who had given notice of the conspiracy to the chief captain was charged with most entire secrecy: "See thou tell no man." For the success of the measures afterwards adopted might depend much upon their being unknown to the conspirators. Hence we may take occasion to observe on the importance of being silent in due season, on the great risk there is of our doing harm to others, as well as to ourselves, by talking, as many do, for talking sake. To know when to be silent, is almost as great a gift as to know what we ought to say. By both means, in their several seasons, we may be enabled to serve our brethren, to signify our concern for God's honour, to baffle the designs of the ungodly, or to put to silence the folly of the profane.

Upon receiving this information, the chief captain appointed several hundreds of soldiers, horsemen, and spearmen, to escort Paul safe to Caesarea. This is the right use of training men to arms, that they may serve to protect the peaceable from the violent, to save the property, or laws, or rights of those, who are compassed about with cruel enemies. The magistrate, we are told, "beareth not the sword in vain." Rom. 13. 4. And it is undoubtedly his duty to wield it with decision, when it is needful for the maintenance of good government and peace. But how different is the common use of arms and soldiers, even amongst Christians! How different from the humane precaution of the captain, who by secrecy would prevent the assault of the conspirators, rather than subdue it by the sword and spear! How different from the injunctions of our Saviour, that we should put up the sword into its place, that to him who smiteth us on the right cheek we should turn the other also! How different from the ease supposed by the apostle, that the magistrate has the power of life and death for the punishment of evil doers! How often are the weapons of warfare employed, for no such holy ends as these, and within no such Christian limits, but to further the forbidden purposes of pride, anger, covetousness, or ambition! When we think of all the evils which spring from war, when we consider how few wars which have been ever waged, are free from the stain of wrong on either side, we may well pray, in the words of our affecting Litany, "that it may please God to give to all nations unity, peace, and concord."

At Caesarea the soldiers delivered Paul to Felix; who, having inquired of what province he was, settled to wait before hearing him, till his accusers should appear. This was a plan worthy of a more upright judge than Felix. This is a rule which we might profitably adopt in such judgments as we have sometimes need to form of matters reported in our company. Let us be careful to hear both sides, before we decide in behalf of either, much more before we decide against any one. Let us never condemn unheard. Or rather let us not condemn at all. Whomsoever we hear accused, let us suspend our opinion, let us believe that they are innocent, till we cannot help knowing that they are guilty. Let us think of the apostle kept in Herod's judgment hall. Let this instance of impartiality in Felix weigh with us, that we may also be slow to speak, swift to hear, anxious to learn all that is in favour of the accused, reluctant to express any thing that amounts to condemnation. Some opinions we must form sometimes of each other, for the guidance and direction of our own conduct. God help us in such cases to judge aright! God help us to think no evil, to hope all things, to believe all things; to hope and believe any thing of our brother, rather than that he is worse than ourselves; to judge nothing, if we can help it, before the time; and where we must needs judge something, there to judge charitable judgment!

St. Paul is accused by Tertullus.

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man *a* pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes :

6 Who also hath gone about to *provoke* the temple : whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

7 But the chief captain Lysias came *upon* us, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands,

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee : by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge

of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city :

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets :

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

§ 429. *How to receive reproof.*

St. Paul and Tertullus his accuser are now both before the governor. Let us compare the manner of their address. Let us observe how Tertullus begins with flattering the judge, and goes on to revile the accused ; while St. Paul speaks respectfully towards Felix, takes no notice of the hard names employed by his accuser, and yet firmly maintains his own innocence, in respect of the things laid to his charge. "We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness:" these are the words of fulsome praise, by which the orator hoped to influence the judge. For St. Paul he had no better names than "a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." Let us be watchful, if we ever have occasion to express an unfavourable opinion, let us be watchful that we use no words of harshness. If it be our office to report or to reprove a fault, let us do it with words of meekness, and in tones of gentleness and love.

And when we are ourselves accused, when any fault is found with our behaviour, let us be careful that we answer not with words of anger, that we hear not with feelings of revenge. Let us lay to heart attentively the charge preferred. Let us well consider whether it be not grounded in the truth. Few faults ever can be found, to which we might not every one of us in some degree plead guilty. Though the things have not been done, the feeling may have been felt. The pride which it implied, the deceitfulness, the folly, the uncharitableness, these we have abundantly by nature in our hearts. And of these there remain in most of us very ample traces, of which we might be thankful to be reminded, which we ought to be glad of a warning to amend. To confess our faults one to another is a part of our Christian duty. He who helps us to see them, helps us to confess them, and is therefore entitled to our cordial thanks. He helps us to confess them to each other. He helps us to confess them unto God. He helps us therefore towards attaining one great object of our daily prayers, forgiveness of sin. I thank you, let us answer, by our manner or by our words, I thank you for your faithful admonition. My own heart is, I know, deceitful. My own eyes, I am well aware, are blind. If the charge you bring against me be correct, I am indebted to you for convincing me of sin ; I own you for an instrument in the hands of God, to help forward the salvation of my soul.

But though the charge brought against us should be utterly unfounded, though it be false as well as cruel and unkind, if we have not moved the sedition, not been ringleaders of the sect, not been parties to whatever act of evil has been done, then there seems to be even less room if possible for wrath, because there is more of peace within the soul. Let us therefore, like St. Paul, exercise ourselves "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Let us watch that we do wilfully no wrong to any one ; that we neither deal dishonestly, nor think unkindly towards our neighbours ; and that we neither obey God negligently, nor dare to disobey his will. Then whatever names we may be called, whatever sins may be laid to our charge, we shall have hope toward God, that at the resurrection of the dead, we shall be counted just in his sight, through Christ.

St. Paul before Felix.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 ¹ Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, ¹ Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul² and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

¹ Ch. 21. 27.

² Ch. 23. 6.

§ 430. *Against abuse of opportunities.*

At the conclusion of his defence before Felix, St. Paul turned his discourse towards a subject, which he much wished to impress upon the attention of his hearer, the resurrection from the dead. By this means the governor understood at once the nature of the charge which was brought against him. For having been some years governor of Judæa, he must have heard much of the doctrines of the Christians, and must have been aware also of the enmity entertained against them by the Jews. And therefore he dismissed the charge for the present, keeping the apostle still in custody, but allowing him to enjoy the society of his friends. This large degree of liberty, with which the Roman governor indulged his prisoner, should be a profitable lesson to Christians, as to the humane consideration which is due to those, who for their offences are confined to the walls of a prison. From these outcasts of society how seldom can it be useful to shut out such few friends as they still have left! How seldom can it be humane or charitable to refuse them that intercourse with their kind, which is among the chief means ordained by the providence of God, to alleviate the sorrows and to enlarge the joys of life, to soften the heart to good impressions, and to make the soul ashamed of its iniquity. Let us learn to look not with horror, but with compassionate concern, on those who suffer the sad penalties of the law. Let us hope, and pray, and labour in their behalf, that their punishment, besides preventing others from offending, may be made effectual to turn their hearts.

Felix, with his wife Drusilla, "sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith of Christ." This would have seemed to many a fitting opportunity for a prisoner to win the favour of the governor. But what topics shall we reckon that the apostle will select for his discourse before the guilty Felix? Assuredly nothing less than those important truths which he must have known to be most unwelcome to his hearers. "Righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;" these were the things of which he thought fit to reason, to one who was an unjust judge, to an adulterer and adulteress, who lived only for their pleasure in this present world. For such were Felix and Drusilla; Felix, a judge so profligate, that he kept Paul the longer in prison in the hope that money would have been given for his deliverance; and Drusilla, "which was a Jewess," of whom it is known from history, that she had been another man's wife, seduced; Felix living with her in defiance of that law against adultery, which as a Jewess she must have known to be from God.

Whilst St. Paul thus reasoned, "Felix trembled." But to what little purpose was his trembling! "When I have a convenient season I will call for thee." How long was this convenient season ere it came! How little do we hear of its ever coming! How much have we cause to fear that it never came at all! If like Felix we tremble, let us not like Felix delay. Let us hold the present to be the most convenient of all seasons for repentance and amendment of life. Let righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, be the matter of our daily meditation, the object of our hopes, the topic of our discourse, or the welcome employment of our lives. Most grievously must the sin of Felix have been increased by his frequent communing with St. Paul. To send for the apostle, and to hear him, for no end but for the love of money, what a hardness of heart does this argue, what a deafness to the voice of truth! The more occasions we enjoy for spiritual instruction, how much the more must we have to answer for hereafter! And what must be our condition in the judgment which is to come, if we now listen for no other object than our credit's sake in the world, if we frequent God's house, and read his word, only to please our friends and neighbours, only lest we lose their good esteem?

St. Paul is accused by the Jews before Festus.

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cæsarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cæsarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them || more than ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

|| Or, as some copies read, *no more than eight or ten days.*

§ 431. *That we may not lay complaint without proof.*

The high priest and the chief of the Jews would have St. Paul sent for to Jerusalem, in order that they might kill him by the way. See how greatly the case is now altered! What city in our Israel, what nation of all those, the most enlightened in the world, who now hold the Christian truth, would not gladly seize on an opportunity, if any such could possibly be offered, to entertain the great apostle of the Gentiles! How would the roads be crowded, not with enemies lying in wait to take away his life, but with friends craving to do him honour! How would the most mighty in the land, no less than the most poor and needy, desire favour, not against him, but from him! How little then need we care for the present judgment of the world, when we consider how easily it is changed! How little should we be guided by what men now think of us, when we reflect how soon they will be apt to think far otherwise! How little should we be disturbed by what here we suffer, or what here we are in danger of suffering, when we see one of whom the world was not worthy, and whom it would now most highly honour, thus held in bonds by the rulers, and waylaid for his life by the chief of the people!

Festus seems to have been aware of the design against Paul's life. For he "answered, that Paul should be kept at Cæsarea." And as he intended to depart thither before long, he bade the accusers follow him, that the cause might be determined. And yet presently we read that he was "willing to do the Jews a pleasure." So that after the apostle had declared his innocency, the governor notwithstanding asked him, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?" How worthless was his precious care for the safety of St. Paul, whom he was now willing to expose to risk of harm! And yet how common is this infirmity of purpose, to resolve aright to day and to do wrong to morrow, to wish to do a pleasure to those whose good opinion would be profitable to ourselves, even at the risk of doing injury to our neighbour, and doing wickedly in the sight of God! Never let us be prevailed upon either by the fear of man, or by the desire to please his evil passions, never let us be prevailed upon to do that which we know to be wrong for us to do, or which we even suspect might be hurtful to our brethren.

"The Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove." Here we have a lesson against the practice, so common in our daily conversation, of finding fault with each other, of making complaints against each other, which we cannot prove. Let us call to mind how many things we hear, how many things we are tempted to say, which amount to censure of each other. Let us examine how few out of these numerous charges we should be able, if called upon, to prove, in how few instances we know the real facts, in how few we know those who know them; how many of these complaints are mere guesses, surmises, suspicions; reports, handed on from one to another, altered, exaggerated, embittered, according to the temper of those through whose lips they pass. We should then find ourselves in more instances than we think of, very like unto these malicious Jews, and very like also unto that "accuser of our brethren," "which accuseth them before our God day and night." Rev. 12. 10. But he at least, it may be thought, can prove his accusation! He can point to the books which shall be opened, and there find set down against each Christian brother the sins we have committed against God. Far from it. God be praised, there is assurance in his word, not only of pardon, but of oblivion for sin. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Isa. 1. 18. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 31. 34. "All that believe are justified from all things." Acts 13. 39. The judgment is indeed set. The accuser stands nigh. The books are opened. But his malice is defeated. The handwriting he would refer to is blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ. And through the righteous offering of that spotless sacrifice the repentant sinner is borne out in declaring, to the confusion of the enemy of his soul, neither against man, nor yet against God, "have I offended any thing at all."

Festus telleth king Agrippa concerning Paul.

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because * I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the \parallel hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cæsar.

* Or, I was doubtful how to inquire hereof.

\parallel Or, judgment.

§ 432. *Our appeal to the King of kings.*

"I appeal unto Cæsar," were the words which delivered Paul from the fury of the Jews. Being a citizen of Rome he had a right to appeal to the judgment of the emperor. And this is no small confirmation of what is related in this history. These things were not done in a corner. Governors, and kings, and emperors, were concerned. The facts were entered into public records, and could there be verified. It could be known by enquiry, for hundreds of years afterwards, whether St. Paul had indeed stood before the judgment seat of Festus, had been examined in the presence of Agrippa, and had appealed to the emperor of Rome. Thankfully we thus reflect of our religion, that it asks for no concealment, but invites us to prove all things, whilst it commands us to hold fast that which is good. See 1 Thess. 5. 21.

This account, which Festus gives to king Agrippa, differs widely from the history of the facts. In the one case the chief priest and the elders are represented as "desiring to have judgment against" St. Paul. In the history we are told that they "desired favour against him." Ver. 3. They asked not for equitable judgment, but for a partial sentence. In the one case Festus represents himself as proposing to send St. Paul to Jerusalem, because he "doubted of such manner of questions." In the history we are told that it was because he was "willing to do the Jews a pleasure." Ver. 9. So mean and disingenuous are the most mighty of mankind, if they desire to please men rather than God! So apt are all men to distort the truth, when they speak of their own motives or behaviour; so ready to see themselves, and to represent themselves, in a light more favourable than they ought. Let us on the contrary own freely to our faults and frailties; and whilst we are ready to esteem others better than ourselves, see Philipp. 2. 3, let us at the same time be inclined to esteem ourselves worse, if it be possible, than we really are. For so only can we esteem ourselves aright, if against our natural inclination to justify ourselves we set our conscience most diligently on the watch for our offences; and if to balance the many sins which we are never able to discern, we repent of some which may be more than we are really guilty of.

And yet we may not listen in despondency or despair to those many and fearful charges, which oftentimes the evil spirit, the accuser of the brethren, raises up to the discomfiture of the soul. When he would torment us with thoughts of sin, when he would fain have us, as he desired to have the apostles, that he might sift us as wheat, when he is laying wait for us by the way to devour us, we may apply in our distress St. Paul's appeal to Cæsar, we may appeal for our deliverance to the King of kings. "Judge me," we may say with David, "O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not triumph over me." Ps. 35. 21. They suggest to me my sinfulness. Help Thou me to think of thy forgiveness. They press upon my mind the depth of my iniquity, the utter worthlessness of even that which I do best. View Thou, rather, and help me to keep in view, the merits of my Saviour Christ, the righteousness of his life, the atoning power of his death. I appeal, O God, to Thee. I appeal in hope. I appeal in confident persuasion that through thy mercy and the merits of my Saviour Christ, I shall be justified in thy presence and clear when I am judged.

Lord, when at thy judgment seat we shall hereafter stand, give us, we pray Thee, confidence to appeal to Thee. Enable us to say of the talents which Thou hast given us, that we have put them to the use Thou didst design! Enable us to plead of the death Thou didst die for us, that we have had faith in it according to thy will!

Agrippa and Bernice attend to hear St. Paul.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he

ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

§ 433. *Hinderances to our profiting by hearing the word.*

King Agrippa's inclination to hear St. Paul's defence, led to his being almost persuaded to be a Christian. See ch. 26. 28. So at least he professed, and so probably he felt at the time; though it is not impossible that his words may have been designed for no more than civility to the apostle. It is a great point gained to be disposed to hear at all. Only we should not hear out of mere curiosity. Only we should not go to the place of hearing, like Agrippa or Bernice, with great pomp, as if it were rather to shew ourselves to men, than to learn of God. These are two of the most common hinderances to our profiting by the ministry of the word, as it is preached in the congregation of the church. Who has not observed that both the rich and poor are apt to think very much of their appearance, when they assemble on the sabbath day in God's house of prayer? Who has not felt in himself, at some period of his life, an anxiety to shew to advantage on such occasions, a vanity altogether inconsistent with the character of a Christian worshipper, and with the holiness of the place of worship? Many amongst the poor stay away from church merely for want of clothing such as they wish to wear. Many amongst the rich had almost better stay away, than come dressed so as to attract the notice of their neighbours, and to puff up their own hearts with conceit. It is well to wear in such a place the best of dress we have. But it is well to have none better than we might there wear without appearance of pomp, or risk of vanity. It is well to have decent clothes to wear at church; it is well to work diligently that we may have them. But it is better to go thither in the meanest of apparel than not to go at all. It is better to go "clothed in humility," 1 Pet. 5. 5, and to remember that it is "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Pet. 3. 4.

Neither can we expect to profit by hearing the word of God, if we go to hear it out of an idle curiosity, merely to please what the apostle calls "itching ears," 2 Tim. 4. 3, without any desire for edification in our hearts. This seems to have been Agrippa's chief motive for coming to hear St. Paul. "I would also hear the man myself." There is no reason here assigned beyond his own inclination. Nor did he take any pains afterwards, as far as we are told, to inquire into the apostle's ease, or to see justice done to him. If we resort to preaching for amusement only, in that amusement we have our reward. We must not look to be edified unless we pray, and strive to profit by what we hear. We must listen as to the words of life. We must feel that our own life eternal is at stake. We must consider ourselves as studying how best we may escape the wrath to come. We must attend to preaching as to an ordinance of God. We must look for profit because it is his ordinance. We must have respect not to the person of the minister, but to his appointment as the servant of the Lord. We must remember that whoever plants, whoever waters, it is God who giveth the increase.

Festus first determined to send his prisoner to Rome; and afterwards sought for something to write against him. This testimony to the innocency of the apostle may remind us of what Pilate was forced to own of our Lord, "I find in him no fault at all." John 18. 38. Happy was St. Paul in being thus like unto his Master, in thus suffering wrongfully for his Master's sake! And happy are we also if like St. Paul, and like our Lord, we can be clear when we are judged. But, alas! we are well aware that it can be no hard matter, to find much to be set down against us. We must feel often, that for our sins it would be no more than true that we "ought not to live any longer." How great is God's goodness that He still spares us to repent! How precious is the sacrifice of our blessed Lord, that by reason thereof it is agreed in our behalf that our sins on our repenting are remembered no more!

St. Paul answereth for himself before Agrippa.

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 Especially *because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews:* wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of

the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 ¹ Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

¹ Ch. 8. 3.

§ 434. *How we should meet an unjust accusation.*

St. Paul thought himself happy in having an opportunity of answering before king Agrippa, touching the things whereof he was accused of the Jews. It should be a pleasure to any one who is under accusation to answer his accusers, and to satisfy the beholders that he has given no offence. For it is a part of our Christian duty to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," Rom. 12. 17, and to make our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. See Matth. 5. 16. And for this end we must be willing to take great pains, explaining patiently at length, as St. Paul does here, the whole matter laid to our charge, grudging no weariness we can have to undergo, or may risk imposing on our hearers, if we may thereby escape giving offence unto our brethren.

For this is the object we ought to have in view, in any such explanation of our conduct, not to justify ourselves, but to avoid scandalizing one another. And so St. Paul puts the matter to the Corinthians, "think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." 2 Cor. 12. 19. Otherwise we should but humour our own pride, and harden ourselves in sin, instead of saving our brother from offence. To harden ourselves in sin is the very height of sinfulness. Whilst to defend what we have done aright, may come of that most excellent of gifts, the charity which is not puffed up. For in such a case pride and selfishness suggest that we need not stoop to offer an explanation. Pride and selfishness in such a case would say, that it is not worth our while, being right, to take the pains of proving that we are so. Pride and selfishness would have made the apostle sorry, instead of glad, to be called upon to answer before Agrippa, content with the consciousness of being innocent, and indifferent as to what was thought of his conduct, either by Agrippa or by the Jews. But charity required him to take every opportunity of pleading the truth of Jesus Christ. Charity made him long to convert his hearers. Charity makes us anxious to consider, in every thing we have to say or do, how we may do most good to those with whom we live.

And with charity must go hand in hand humility. For thus we find it in this case of the apostle. He was not ashamed to own how far he had done wrong, whilst yet he knew no better. He was not ashamed to plead guilty to that which many are more ashamed of than of wickedness, namely ignorance, which is indeed when wilful amongst the worst of sins. In the midst of his defence, St. Paul acknowledged it as a sin, that he used to persecute the church of Christ. And this he mentions as a reason of probability to his hearers, that they might hereafter come to hold for truth what then they esteemed incredible. Thus he would turn his past errors to account in the propagating his present convictions. Like the water which was poured over the sacrifice of Elijah, he would have the former coldness and aversion of his heart, to the cause of Christian truth, add intensity to the proof which that truth derived from his present zeal and fervour of belief. And this further shews that it was not for his own character's sake, but for the edifying of his hearers, that he was glad to make this defence at all. Let us therefore be as willing to own what we have done amiss, as to repel an unfounded accusation. Let us do both for the same single object, the edifying of our brethren. This it is that solves all difficulties; the love of each other. This it is that fulfils every law; the love of each other. And thus, whether we defend or accuse ourselves, if we do it not to please ourselves, but only out of love for each other, we follow the example of St. Paul, and do the will of our Saviour Christ.

St. Paul relateth his conversion.

12 'Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear

unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

¹ Ch. 9. 2.

§ 435. *How we might help to convert others.*

St. Paul, for the chief point in his defence, relates to king Agrippa the history of his own conversion. For this was a thing ever present to his memory. And so also the chief mercies we have received ought to be the subjects of our frequent mention, and of our continual thankfulness. And further this conversion of St. Paul was a thing most likely to assist in converting the hearts of his hearers. And what indeed can be better fitted to affect our own reluctant hearts with hope, and thankfulness, and joy, than the account which is here given of God's goodness, towards the most determined of his enemies. Have we ever been like Saul at enmity with the religion of our Lord? Have we ever been in a state that is little less than enmity in us who are baptized Christians, have we been ever strangers to the power of the Gospel in our hearts? And will it not now move us, to consider how He whom we thus persecute and crucify afresh, is still ready to receive us to Himself, still grieved to think that it is hard for us to kick against the pricks?

"Why persecutest thou me?" is what He kindly asks in each sting of an awakened conscience. "Why persecutest thou me?" is what He graciously inquires each time we are convinced of sin, each time we do wrong, and feel that it is wrong, each time we neglect to do right, and feel that we ought to do it. "Why persecutest thou me?" He mercifully repeats, as long as life and grace continue; when at each repeated sin we might more reasonably expect, for we much more deserve, that He should say: Depart from me thou heedless sinner; thou shalt resist my will no more. Yet the more we have resisted our Saviour's will, and we probably know in ourselves of many more such instances of sin than we can possibly be aware of in any other, the more we have opposed our Saviour's will, we see here a way in which we might, the more assist, so great is his mercy, if henceforth we serve Him truly, in which we might the more largely help, to shew forth and promote his glory.

To open the eyes of others, to turn them from darkness unto light, this should be the constant study of those who feel that they have themselves been once in darkness, and that by grace they have now been brought from the power of Satan unto the knowledge of God. And they have herein some fitness for the work, they know the condition from which they wish to save their brethren, they are sensibly alive to the misery of a state of sin, they can tell by what means they have been themselves recovered out of the snares of Satan. Let him therefore who regards himself as a sinner saved, be zealous for the salvation of his brethren. And if there be no one that can hope to be saved at all, who has not this view of his own condition, who is not sensible of many sins of his own against God, who has not felt himself repentant, reconciled, renewed let there be no one who does not also strive to make manifest the power of religion in his own heart, with a view to its having influence on all those who as yet neither repent nor believe.

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," these are the objects which we should aim at in our conversation with them, who love this present world. "To repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance," these are the things to which we should exhort each other. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in" Jesus Christ, these are the precious privileges, the exceeding great reward, by which we may stir up others to repent, by which we ought to be ourselves most deeply moved. For to these things we are called. We are invited, urged, almost constrained, almost compelled, to come in and to possess them. Shall we not then according to our ability invite and constrain our neighbours? Shall we not without ceasing bear testimony unto them, both of all that we have hitherto experienced, and of all that we hope hereafter to enjoy?

St. Paul replieth to Festus, exhorteth Agrippa.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

§ 436. *That it is most reasonable to be pious.*

St. Paul's account of the help which he had obtained from God, and of the testimony which he had borne to the truth of Christ, made Festus suppose him to be beside himself. "Much learning doth make thee mad." This was no more than had been said against our Lord Himself; and that even by his friends, his kinsmen, and acquaintances according to the flesh, "He is beside himself." Mark 3. 21. And so it must often seem to those who know nothing of the power of religion, it must seem as if the more zealous and affectionate of Christians were little better than out of their minds. To deny ourselves, when we might please ourselves; to give, when we might withhold, or even when we might receive; to bear with an affront, which we might easily resent; to requite evil with good, when we have opportunity for revenge; to spend, and to be spent, and to count all things but loss, for the sake of Christ, when we can neither see Him, nor hear his voice, nor handle the wages of his work; all this must seem like madness to the worldly minded. And it does indeed prove beyond dispute that we are out of that mind, in which we by nature are.

And yet these are the words of soberness and truth. It is really better thus to speak, and thus to do. It is better for us here. It is better for us hereafter. It is more wise, if we look to our own interest. It is more reasonable, if we have regard to God's honour. We do but as the worldly wise would counsel in their own generation, we spare to day that we may abound to morrow. We waste not, that we may want not. We spare our present pleasure, that we may have joy for evermore. We waste not our present opportunities, that we may not have to long in vain for time misspent, when time shall be no longer. And like them also, we have present pleasure in our present self-denial. We enjoy the prospect of our gains. We delight in counting up the riches of our heavenly inheritance. And we are more than content, we are thankful, in the loss of all we have on earth, that can help us by its loss towards gain eternal.

Thus much of our own interest. Nor is it otherwise of our devotion unto God. Here also we speak the words of soberness and truth. Here also we act as reasonable men are wont to act, with those to whom they are indebted for kind regard. God has loved us; therefore we love Him. He created us. He preserves us. He has redeemed us, forgiven us our sins, created us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works and unto a hope of heaven. Therefore we hope. Therefore we work the works of Him who has redeemed us. Therefore we have pleasure in obeying Him, in yielding up to Him our whole hearts and lives, in denying ourselves that we may do his will. And however great be the sacrifice we have to make, however different from the practice of the world may be the conduct we are called upon to pursue, however extreme the difficulty of the path we have to take; we count it no more than reason to endure all trouble, to make all sacrifices, and to risk all loss, and shame, and suffering, for the sake of Him, who in our behalf left the glory of his Father in heaven, and submitted to die in agony on the cross.

Would to God then that we might be altogether such as was St. Paul, even bonds and all, if it be needful! Would to God that we may be not almost but altogether persuaded to be Christians! We cannot serve God by halves. We cannot love Christ or do his will by halves. We cannot by halves enjoy the fulfilment of his promises, his grace on earth, his glory in heaven. To attempt to do so, this is madness. To think that we can thus serve two masters, this is to be beside ourselves. Let us not therefore ever be of two minds, but of one only. And let the mind we are in be that mind, which was also in Christ Jesus. Let it be the mind which the world counts madness; but which sense and reason and religion, unite to urge on us, as being nothing else than soberness and truth.

St. Paul setteth sail for Rome.

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexan-

dria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under * Crete, over against Salmone;

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*,

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with || hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

* Or, *Candy*.

|| Or, *injury*.

§ 437. *Of our heavenward voyage.*

St. Paul in the character of a prisoner, and on his voyage towards the judgment seat of Cæsar, may remind us of our own pilgrimage through life, how like it is to this launching and sailing of a ship, how we are born in bandage to sin, how many are the perils which surround us in our course, how fearful is the judgment which awaits us at the end. Rocks there are beneath, around us storms and tempest; the many stumbling blocks which the world continually presents, the many snares which Satan is ever laying for our souls, the many cares and sorrows or tumultuous joys, which tend to turn aside our hearts from heaven. Whilst in the current of our own rebellious thoughts, in the force of our own corrupted will, in the flesh lusting contrary to the spirit, we have as it were an adverse wind, which suffers us not, however fully we resolve, to make good speed unto the harbour where we fain would be.

Thankful we ought to feel, that in this our heavenward voyage, we have friends on earth who courteously entreat us, we have the many comforts of kindness and affection, we have liberty to refresh our weary spirits with the converse of those we love. Let us never forget how much we owe to God, for giving us this great help under all our trials, this resource in the pains of sickness, in the visitation of sorrow, or in the approach of death. And yet even on these best of earthly joys we may not too deeply fix our affections, nor devote to them too large a portion of our time. The fast is past, and sailing is now dangerous: this is what we ought to feel at all seasons of our life, that the time is short, that no one moment must be wasted, that we are daily compassed around with hurt and much damage, or at least much risk of damage, to the great object of our life. It is our eternal venture that is in jeopardy. Whether we shall live for ever with God in glory, or with the devil and his angels in the pit of destruction, this is what we risk each day we are on earth; this it is which should make us earnestly desirous each day to redeem the time.

Never then let us give heed to those, who would persuade us that all is safe. Never let us believe the words spoken by the world, more than those things which are declared to us by Christ and his apostles. It is with fear and trembling that we must work our own salvation. See Philipp. 2. 12. It is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God. See Acts 14. 22. The righteous scarcely will be saved; where then will the ungodly and the sinner appear? See 1 Pet. 4. 18. To be aware beforehand of our risk, this is our greatest wisdom. To watch, and to be always on our guard, to waste no time, to spare no pains, and to follow ever the best counsel we can obtain, these are duties to be always borne in mind, if we would arrive in safety at our journey's end. How great is God's goodness, in giving us his word, for a guide in all our wanderings, for a compass that never fails in the darkest seasons of our voyage! There we may consult his prophets, there we may read what his apostles wrote, there we may hear what was spoken by his ever blessed Son. If heretofore we have spent much time, without due attention to this heavenly teaching, let us now at length resort to it with joy, and do devoutly as we are therein directed.

May God herein give us the counsel we require! May God impart to us the strength we need! May He protect us in our voyage, and bring us safe unto the harbour of his heavenly kingdom, there to dwell with Him for ever!

The ship is overtaken by a storm.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

14 But not long after there || arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

|| Or, beat.

§ 438. *What sacrifices we ought to make for heaven.*

See how surely the word of prophecy is fulfilled, how exactly the things spoken by St. Paul came to pass! See how much better it is to believe the few who speak advisedly, than to give heed to the more part, who know not what they say! "The haven was not commodious to winter in." The place assigned to us by the providence of God, seems, oftentimes, in our erring judgment, not suitable to our wants and wishes. The business or profession, the state or condition of life, the dwelling place or country in which we might most securely weather the storms of passion or adversity, these we are often tempted foolishly to leave, because we trust more to our own wisdom than to God's direction. "The south wind blew softly." Our prospects are flattering. Our worldly counsellors assure us of success. We set sail on some ungodly course, and suppose that we have obtained our purpose. "But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind." And thus frequently, when all seems most fair, our hopes are crossed by disappointment, our affections chilled by unkind treatment, our worldly wisdom baffled by adversity, or our best intentions frustrated by our own corrupt propensities. Who then would not rather ask of God? Who would not rather take from Him, and from his word, direction for all the exigencies of life?

And seeing that we are thus beset by sin and sorrow, seeing that we are thus frequently beguiled by the cares, and riches, and pleasures of the world, might we not also take an useful lesson, from the measures used by these mariners towards lightening the ship? Is there no treasure which we should do well to throw away? Is there no fond affection, no eager hope, no project of pride or of ambition, to which we cling as to our most dear possession, and which we must first necessarily part with from our hearts, before we can have any ground to hope for safety? See what pains are taken by those who sail upon the seas, to secure, if it be possible, their lives! See how readily, when life is at stake, they cast out with their own hands, not the lading only, but the very tackling of the ship! The very means of sailing they throw overboard, to prevent the risk of sinking. Not only therefore our superfluities, but the very necessities of life, we must now rather part with, than perish in the world which is to come. If we are living by means of an unlawful trade, if we are thriving by any means which God has forbidden, if our consciences are convinced that the food we eat is the fruit of robbery or wrong, that the clothing we put on is wrung by oppression from the labours of the poor, or gained by fraud from the abundance of the rich; we had better cast it out than wear it; we had better cast it out than feed on it; we had better be naked and hungry in this present life, and learn to beg or dig for our subsistence, than fare sumptuously for the present, and perish miserably in the end.

And is it not most strange that men should so clearly see all this in the case of present perils, and so rarely feel the force of the same reasons, in the risk of eternal shipwreck? That they should count it madness to spare the lading of a ship, when they are exceedingly tossed with a tempest, and should yet pass for wise, if they heap up riches upon earth, if they spare to spend, refuse to give, and fear not to exact oppressively; when each single hour of their lives they are confessedly exposed to risk of death, liable to lose at once their goods, and also their own souls? Never may we thus madly hoard what only aggravates our danger. Never may we thus lay up store of wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Never may we hesitate to make any sacrifice on earth, which God's word and will demand of us. Never may we fail to use all helps for heaven, which our Lord in his mercy has placed within our reach. And then, whatever tempest may befall us, though neither sun nor stars in many days appear, though no prospect of present comfort open to our view, all hope that we shall be saved in the end will never be taken away from us.

St. Paul exhorteth the ship's company.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about mid-

night the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

§ 439. *That God's promises bind us to his commands.*

"Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me;" what a bitter thought must this have been to those, who were now in jeopardy of death; who must have felt that had they followed the advice of the apostle, they might have been safe in harbour for the winter! And what a bitter thing will it be hereafter, to such as now despise the ministry of the word, when all too late they shall find its truth fulfilled, in the sentence of their own condemnation. Then will they call to mind what now they make light of; then wish in vain that they had listened with attention to the truth which at present they neglect. All their gain will then prove harm and loss. All that they now most highly value will be then abomination in their sight. For then will be brought to pass what is written in the book of Proverbs, concerning the wisdom which is from on high: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind." Prov. 1. 24—27.

But though this must be the case with all who remain impenitent unto the end of life, it is God's gracious assurance in the Gospel, to repentant sinners, that notwithstanding their past disobedience and perversity, they need not fear, there shall be no loss of the immortal soul, if they truly believe in Christ. Wherefore let us be of good cheer. Let us believe God, that it will be, even as He has told us. Let us found our cheerfulness upon his promise. Let us trust in no power of our own, but in his only. Let us feel that we are saved not for our own sakes, but for the sake of Him who took on Him our flesh, and became as one of the same company in the ship. "Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." Shipwreck must take place. The ship must be lost, though not the lives of the crew. Death must be encountered even by those, whose eternal life is safe in God's keeping, according to his word. Here we must still suffer sorrows and adversities. Here we must still undergo disease and death. The ship is wrecked, but yet the lives are saved. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." All they that are in Christ, all they that live by faith in Him, all they that love as He has loved them, these though they die shall live, these shall not die eternally.

And now having these promises so gracious and so sure, may we safely remit our own exertions? Far from it. Hear the warning of St. Paul: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Had the shipmen made good their intended desertion of the vessel, had they, who were most skilled in the management of the ship, not stayed for the assistance of the rest, notwithstanding the assurance of St. Paul, notwithstanding God's word spoken by his angel, all must have perished. God's promises leave us bound by his commands. God's mercy makes us only so much the more obliged to do what He has revealed of his will. We must work, as if all depended upon our working; though we know, and believe, and feel, and own, that when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, and are saved only through the merits of our Lord.

Least of all must we think ourselves at liberty to neglect those most urgent of all duties, which we owe to each other as brethren of Christ, those which arise from Christian love. Love is the fulfilment of the Law. Love is the fruit and proof of faith. And love to man, out of love for God, is most utterly incompatible with every form of selfishness. We must not get any thing for ourselves, to the detriment of our neighbour. We must not seek even our eternal safety, by any means which might hinder his. We must not flee out of the ship in its extremity, till we have waited and laboured for the saving of all them that are in it. Let us therefore, whilst we flee from sin, still seek to convert the sinner. Whilst we renounce the world, and abhor the evil that is in it, let us cling to the hope of saving it from perishing; and rather slightly share its risk than not largely help in its deliverance.

St. Paul and the rest come safe to land.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to

thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had || taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first into the sea, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken* pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

|| Or, cut the anchors, they left them in the sea, &c.

§ 440. *Against hoarding what is more than enough.*

We have read before of the long abstinence of this ship's company. See ver. 21. And here we learn that for fourteen days they had continued fasting, having had neither time nor appetite for their ordinary meals. And thus the Psalmist describes the extremity of trouble: "My heart is smitten down, and withered like grass: so that I forget to eat my bread." Psalm 102. 4. But the apostle would have us take all needful nourishment, even in the time of extreme distress. "He took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat." This is a pattern for us to imitate in our trials; let us never forget the thanks due to God, the duty and advantages of giving praise unto his name. Though our meal should be interrupted, let our prayers at least not fail. Though we have to eat the bread of affliction, let us eat it with thankfulness unto God. And this will be one chief advantage of a settled habit and order in our devotions. It will constrain us, as the appointed time comes round, to think of Him who visits us for our good. Whether it be sorrow or joy which breaks into the usual course of our employments, let us but be accustomed to a fixed time of prayer, and it will be the less likely to interrupt our prayers. We shall feel that we have an engagement which we are bound to keep, if we feel engaged to ask of God for his gracious help, and to thank Him for his abundant goodness. And when we kneel down or stand up, to do honour to his name, we shall be reminded of a world, which is ever nigh at hand; with which neither this world's sorrows, nor its joys, are fit to be one moment compared.

"And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea." This was no more than necessary for their safety; though it proved also great confidence in the assurance of St. Paul, that there should not an hair fall from the head of any one of them. And how well may this remind us of the duty, recommended in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Eccles. 11. 1. When we have eaten enough, let us be free to bestow on others; let us be free to give, both for their relief in this world, and for their help in preparation for the world which is to come. More than enough it is useless to try to keep for our own selves. Death comes, and we cannot consume it. Or death cuts off those from whom we would amass it, before we die and leave it for their use. To cast it out first would both lighten our own load, and be of benefit to them that dwell around us. So much the less we should have ourselves to answer for. So much the more good we should have done unto our brethren.

"And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape." What ignorance of the value of man's life, what fearful indifference to the guilt of bloodshedding is manifested in the counsel of these soldiers! What selfishness is this, that to save their own credit in the custody of the prisoners, they would put to death their fellow creatures uncondemned, one of whom at least might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar! See chap. 26. 32. Let us in our own difficulties have an eye always to the interests of those committed to our charge. Let us not, to save our own credit, or property, or life, do any thing which might injure theirs. And let us remember that to our charge are committed all whom we can help, even the least of our brethren, even the most abject and abandoned of mankind.

God make us thankful for all the blessings we enjoy! God make us anxious to impart them as far as possible to all those who are in need of our assistance! God teach us to feel responsible for all we have; and when we have eaten enough ourselves, or sooner, to cast out even all that we can spare, and more, to those whose wants are more urgent than our own!

St. Paul at Melita.

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

§ 441. *The attributes of God.*

"The barbarous people shewed us no little kindness." This is the way in which the inhabitants of Melita treated St. Paul and his companions, when shipwrecked. And this is a thing which we should be glad to hear of, that the most uncivilized of mankind are capable of much kindly feeling; that they who know the least of what we call the arts of life, and who have the least acquaintance with religious truth, can yet shew on such an occasion as a shipwreck, humanity to the needy and forlorn. How much more then ought we Christians, who enjoy so many blessings, who partake of so many comforts here, and have such ample hope for the world which is to come, how much more ought we to feel for the wants of others all around us, who suffer by cold or rain, by nakedness or hunger, by ignorance or sin! Some of these evils we have never felt. Others we might avoid easily if we would. Let us receive kindly all those who in such matters have fared worse than ourselves. Let us kindle in our hearts that fire of love, which will warm at once both them and us.

And least of all let us ever venture to reflect on them, as if the sufferings of the most abject of mankind were any sure sign of their being more wicked than ourselves. This is a thought more fit for a barbarian than a Christian: "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." The vengeance which we as Christians must expect to follow sin, is not in this world, but in that which is to come. Whether the wicked are exempt from trouble, or whether the evil and the good both suffer here alike, in either case we should turn our thoughts to that appointed day, when God will judge the world in righteousness. See Acts 17. 31. We see enough, in his dealings with us here, to assure us that He is merciful, and longsuffering. We see enough also to convince us, that He will make those suffer who obstinately resist, and that He will make their sufferings end, as even here they often do, to his own glory, and to the advantage of his people.

In what follows there is remarkably fulfilled the promise of our Lord to them that believe: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Mark 16. 18. St. Paul shook off the viper into the fire, "and felt no harm." And as the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux, "he laid his hands on him, and healed him." When he shook off into the fire the venomous beast, and fell not down, as they expected, dead suddenly, the barbarians, who just before had taken him for a murderer, "changed their minds, and said that he was a god." For this was all their notion of a god, some one like unto themselves, but more powerful, more wise, more good. Whilst however we think of God as being good, and wise, and powerful, let us remember that his goodness, wisdom, and power, are far above all comparison with ours, far out of all reach of our conception. And this is in some measure signified to us, by the ability to work signs and miracles, which He has occasionally committed to the hands of men. In the instant healing of a lingering disease, and in the casting off without harm a venomous beast, we see instances of power altogether unlike to any thing which we can conceive to be possessed by mortal men. And however great might be the mistake of the barbarians, in hence concluding that St. Paul was a god, their convictions, and the honours which they paid to him, will rise up in the judgment against those, who will not be hence convinced that God did really interfere. Let us therefore in these miracles own the hand of Him, who maketh sick and maketh whole, who created all things for his glory, and who can subdue, unto the obedience of his will, the most fierce or the most venomous of his creatures.

God help us to overcome in our own hearts the venom of sin! God prosper our endeavours to save ourselves, and them that dwell around us, from that old serpent the devil! See Rev. 12. 9.

St. Paul arriveth at Rome.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they

were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

§ 442. *Good spoken against.*

The particulars of this journey are minutely set down; by which means every fact might be more easily verified, by those who first read this history. This, no doubt, is the chief reason for the mention of the ship's sign, the country it came from, the ports it touched at, as well as the very direction in which the wind was blowing the day before they came to Puteoli. And here let us consider how acceptable in this journey, to Paul the prisoner, must have been the kindness of the brethren, both at Puteoli and at Rome! How welcome to his heart must have been the thought, that they were indeed Christian brethren, believers in the same Saviour Jesus Christ! How constantly should we endeavour to communicate this comfort to our fellow-prisoners in the bondage of the flesh, the assurance that we are partakers of their faith, that we love the same Lord, and hope for the same heaven! How earnestly should we desire this encouragement above all others for ourselves, in the converse which we hold with our fellow creatures, to find that they have the evidence of things not seen, the firm persuasion of things hoped for! In our pilgrimage we are not alone. And it is delightful to think that we have so large a company. It is delightful, it ought to be most gladdening to ourselves, to see, in those we live with, the love, and peace, and joy, which are the fruit of God's Spirit in the heart. And in our behaviour, we ought to convey to such as these, and to all of whom we can have the slightest hope that they fail would serve God through Christ, we ought to convey the same impression as if we were to say, Take courage, Christian brother, in thy heavenward course; fear not to speak the truth; fear not to uphold the honour of our Lord; there are many with thee who have renounced the world, many who resist the devil and the flesh, many who are resolved to count all things loss, so they may but in the end be saved.

The first business of St. Paul, on his arrival at Rome, was to explain his situation to the chief of the Jews. This shews us, that though he had turned to the Gentiles, he had by no means renounced the hope of making converts amongst his kinsmen, the children of Israel. And no doubt he was well aware, that often through their means it was the intent of God to introduce the Gospel unto the Gentiles. And therefore in this city, the metropolis as it then was of the world, he explains first to the Jews, that it was "for the hope of Israel" that he had been bound with chains. In their reply they express their ignorance of his case. And indeed they seemed to know nothing of the Gospel or of Christians, except that they were everywhere "spoken against." See then how little signifies an ill name amongst mankind! See how the hope of Israel was known unto the Jews at Rome only as the object of universal scorn! See how probably that which now mankind most lightly value may be that which deserves our most devout regard! The hope of heaven, the graces of a heavenly life, a meek and quiet spirit, contentment with a low estate, a frame of mind like this, founded on a deep conviction of our sinfulness, on the persuasion that all our sufficiency is of God, that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, and that only for Christ's sake we can any of us be saved; a frame of mind like this, adorned with a corresponding conversation and life, this is still spoken against by the greater part of mankind; but this is that which God esteems; this is the way to dwell with Him for ever.

St. Paul preacheth Jesus to the Jews at Rome.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, 'Go unto this people, and say, Hearing

ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

¹ Is. 6. 9. Matt. 13. 14. Mark 4. 12. Luke 8. 10. John 12. 40. Rom. 11. 8.

§ 443. *The source of unbelief.*

The chief of the Jews at Rome took some pains to make themselves acquainted with what it was that St. Paul preached. They "appointed him a day." And "there came many to him into his lodging." And he explained to them at great length the doctrines and duties and evidences of the Gospel, "from morning till evening." This is a degree of attention which few of either Jews or Christians are willing now to give, a degree of pains which few are willing now to take. Few now set apart a whole day to inquire of the apostles in their writings, or of the ministers who are appointed to preach and teach the things that pertain unto the kingdom of God. Let us grudge no time that we can thus profitably employ. Let us prefer this employment of our time to any other which this world offers. Let us set apart whole hours, whole days, if it be possible, for learning God's will, with a view to doing it. Let us watchfully employ the days and hours, which are purposely set apart for this holy use.

And here we learn what are the chief things to be studied; "the kingdom of God," and all that concerns Jesus Christ, "both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets." It is our duty therefore to know, if possible, the whole of Scripture, the Old Testament and New. We must not neglect the law of Moses and the prophets, whilst we give our chief attention to what is more fully revealed of God's kingdom in the Gospels, and Epistles, and Acts of the Apostles. From all of them taken together, studied together, and explained by one another, we must endeavour to understand aright God's dealings with mankind through Christ, how they prove Him all great, all good, how they bind us to be in all things devoted to his service. May the study of these Acts of the Apostles, which we have now nearly read to the end, help to work in us this love and reverence for God, this devotion of our lives to Him! May it help to convince us that his word is sure, that his designs cannot fail to be accomplished, that his church cannot be overthrown on earth, that his saints, whatsoever they may suffer here, are heirs of endless glory!

St. Paul continued his exhortation, "from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Little therefore need we wonder that when uninspired ministers now proclaim the truth, there should be many who turn away without attention or belief. If some of those who heard St. Paul for a whole day long, after all believed not, little need we be surprised that many now do not believe. Rather we might be astonished, considering how offensive the truth is to our pride, how painful to our passions the duties of the Gospel, and considering how full of frailty those who teach us must needs be, how liable to error in their judgment, and to transgression in their lives, rather we might well be astonished that so many believe, as we trust do, through God's most gracious help. Great is his power that He subdues our will. Great is his wisdom that He informs our minds. Great is his mercy that He bears with our delays, our neglect, and disobedience; that after our oft repeated sins He still invites us to believe and to be saved.

Before the Jews departed, St. Paul reminded them of the prophet's most fearful warning against all who were disposed to unbelief. See Isaiah 6. 9, 10. There is no passage of the Old Testament more frequently referred to in the New, than those words of Isaiah, which describe the common condition of unbelievers. They hear the same as others hear; and yet they hear not to the same purpose. They see the same as others see; and yet they see not to the same good end. And this comes of the grossness of their hearts. It is because a man will not see, therefore he cannot. Therefore his understanding is obscured, because his inclination is corrupt. May God, who has given us a capacity so excellent, remove the dimness which we have brought on it ourselves! May He quicken the affections and enlighten the faculties, with which He at the first so bountifully endued us, and which, after all our sins, He still suffers us to retain! May He move our hearts and mind, that we may both know and love his will!

St. Paul for two whole years teacheth at Rome.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

§ 444. *The things which concern Jesus Christ.*

The history here ends, the history of the Acts of the Apostles, the history of some chief things done, by some of the chief of those holy men, things which it was most important for us to know, most important for our instruction and edification. And amongst the many miracles of grace which are here related, this is not the least important, that St. Paul should for two whole years preach at Rome the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For Rome was at that time the capital of the whole civilized world. It was the city which gave laws to all the rest, and from which there went forth, in every direction, information on all subjects of importance. And therefore it seems purposely to have been ordered, that by the malice of the Jews the great apostle of the Gentiles should be carried thither as a prisoner, and that there he should be permitted, notwithstanding the spirit of persecution which afterwards burst forth from Rome, "to teach those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

And here we may do well to observe the chief reason of so much having been foretold in the Old Testament relating to earthly monarchies, and especially to this empire of Rome. In the book of Daniel, in particular, we find express reference to the succession of events which should take place in the kingdoms of the earth, from the time when it was written until the coming of Christ. The empires of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, are there plainly described, under the likeness of a great image made of several parts; see Daniel, chap. 2; and also under the figure of four great beasts, diverse one from another. See Daniel, chap. 7. And all this is set forth, in order for us to know, that things on earth are ordered by Almighty God according to his will and pleasure; and also that we may see how in all it was his design, to bring into the world the Gospel of his Son, in such times and seasons and circumstances as might be best for its general reception. Let us not wonder then that it seemed good to God, to suffer the world for so many years to be in ignorance. Let us not be perplexed by the painful thought, that during the many hundred years since the Gospel was first preached, God should still have suffered many to be unacquainted with these most excellent of tidings. Let us remember that it is his view, and not ours, which is the true measure both of times and things. From Adam to the birth of Christ, and from thence to our own existence, is not so long for God to wait, as some few single days might seem to us. Empires in the meanwhile flourish and decay. Churches are planted, and bear fruit; grow corrupt, wither, and are rooted out. Patriarchs live hundreds of years. Their children enfeebled by disease soon reckon the days of their ordinary pilgrimage to be but threescore years and ten. But what are these in respect of that eternity where God continually dwells? There to be good, is to be great. There to be at all, is to be for ever. There the main end of this world's continuance is seen to be the redemption of mankind through Christ. And if we could but be there assured of salvation, how all too long each moment would appear, that stays us from entering into heaven; how almost too short eternity itself for the praise of God our Saviour!

This long abode of St. Paul at Rome was not only well fitted to give currency to the Gospel throughout the Roman empire; but we know that in point of fact it produced a great effect in Rome itself. For in his Epistle from this city to the Philippians, he thus writes: "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." Phil. 1. 12, 13. And again to the same Philippians, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." Phil. 4. 22. So that there were not only many Christian converts at Rome, but some among them were in stations of considerable eminence. And his Epistle, written to the Romans before he had seen them, shews that he considered the church of Rome to be one of great importance to the rest, one to which it was expedient to address the most full statement of Christian doctrine, and the most affecting exhortation to Christian practice. At Rome there is still a church remaining; but how greatly fallen away from the apostolic doctrine, how greatly corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ! At Corinth too, and at Ephesus, at Philippi and Colosse, in Galatia and Thessalonica, at all the places to which St. Paul addressed his letters, and of which we read in this history of his labours, at all these, or at nearly all of them, there are still found professing Christians. But how has their light been dimmed, how has their candlestick been removed! See Rev. 2. 5. God grant that

we, who now enjoy the fulness of the light of Christian knowledge, may walk more worthy of our calling, more according to what the apostles did, more according to that which they have written for our good !

Our great rule and guide towards this end is, that we never cease to learn and teach "those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the short description of the Gospel with which the Acts of the Apostles are concluded. "Those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." They are in truth things which concern ourselves. But our Lord is pleased to have them spoken of as things which also concern Him. It is about ourselves that the Gospel speaks, in all that it tells us about Him. It was for us and for our salvation that the things here recorded were done and spoken, written and endured by Him and by his apostles. His death, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, his sending to us the Comforter, his being rejected by the Jews, preached to the Gentiles, these things are most intimately connected with the forgiveness of our sins, and with our inheritance of everlasting life. And yet are they all "things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." They relate to Him. They pertain to his honour, majesty, and dominion. We can neither sin, and He not grieve; nor repent and amend, and He not glory. We can neither grow in grace, and He not be thankful in our behalf; nor be saved in the end, and He not be honoured in the salvation of our souls. In all we now enjoy of good, it is He who gives the increase. In all we hope to have for ever, it is He that will make it good.

Oh that we in like manner might be glad to feel that all which relates to Him relates to us, that all which concerns Him concerns also ourselves ! Oh that we may ever bear in mind that there is nothing of such deep interest to our salvation as the redemption which is through Him; that there is no one so entirely every thing to us as our Saviour Jesus Christ !

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS 1. 1—7.

St. Paul declareth to the Romans his call to be an apostle.

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, ¹ separated unto the gospel of God,

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And † declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection

from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, || for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Acts 13. 2.

† Gr. *determined*.

|| Or, *to the obedience of faith*.

§ 445. *How we may apply to ourselves what is here written.*

In the absence of a friend whom we love, what can be more welcome than to receive an epistle from his hand? What can more shew his lively regard, his unabated concern for our welfare, than for him often to write such letters as give us comfort and instruction, in the way that leads to everlasting life? Such a friend did St. Paul shew himself to the Romans. Such friends have all the apostles proved themselves to be, all who have written the Epistles which we are now to read; such friends, not to those only who first received these letters, but to all Christians every where, unto the end of time. For not only do the matters here treated of very deeply concern us all; but also it was the design of the apostles, or rather of Him under whose guidance the apostles wrote, that these writings should become profitable to all churches, always. And thus it is written in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the very first in point of time of all which St. Paul wrote; “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.” 1 Thess. 5. 27. And to the Colossians the same apostle afterwards writes thus: “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans.” Col. 4. 16. Let us then read as we would the words of one who loves us dearly. And let us read under the conviction, that what the apostles wrote was written by the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Let us read with a view to learn God’s will. Let us read with a view to doing what we learn.

But in applying to ourselves what is here written, we must bear in mind the nature of an epistle, and the circumstances of those to whom these writings were first addressed. Now a letter consists frequently of replies to questions; and usually it supposes many things to be already known, between the parties who correspond. And in order to understand the allusions of a letter, we ought to be acquainted with what has passed previously to the writing of it. This it is which makes the Epistles difficult. We know not readily to what it is that the writer is alluding. But by comparison of the several parts of each Epistle, of one Epistle with another, and of all of them with the Acts of the Apostles, enough of these particulars is known to throw considerable light on the meaning of the most difficult passages. And especially we must be aware that in all cases they were written whilst the Gospel had been but lately introduced into the world, whilst the profession of the faith exposed believers to persecution, and whilst a great part of Christians were persons who had been not baptized in infancy as now, but converted in maturity of years.

These circumstances, and others like to these, account for many expressions in the Epistles, which in our own times, and in our altered situation, can no longer be literally applied. And another separate consideration, of great importance for the right understanding of these letters, is this, that so large a portion of the first converts were Jews. For the chief part of them were prejudiced in favour of their Law, supposing that every letter of it would remain in force under the Gospel, and maintaining that every convert to the Gospel, whether Jew or Gentile, was obliged to observe every particular of the Law. These opinions were the earliest source of variance and strife in the infant churches. And especially at Rome, if we may judge from the pains here taken by St. Paul to refute them, they must have threatened very serious injury to the truth. But though this dispute, and the other points above referred to, were confined to certain times and places, the principles on which they are decided, by the inspired writers of the Epistles, are of universal application in the church of

Christ. These principles therefore let us watch for. These let us carefully ascertain. These let us fix firmly in our memories. These let us apply to our own personal character, to the formation of our opinions, and to the correction of our hearts, to the strengthening of our faith, to the quickening of our love, and to amending the conduct of our lives.

St. Paul begins his Epistle to the Romans with declaring that he had been himself "called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." He tells them of this Gospel, that it had been promised afore by the prophets of God, and that it was "concerning his Son Jesus Christ." He adds, that by this same Jesus he had received "grace and apostleship." And he sets forth that the end of his commission was no less than "obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name," for the name, for the honour, of Jesus Christ. We see then that this apostle, though he speaks elsewhere of himself as "one born out of due time," 1 Cor. 15. 8, was no less certainly commissioned than the rest, by the Lord Jesus to teach his will. We see that the Epistles no less truly teach "the gospel of God," than that part of the New Testament which we call the four Gospels. We may expect to find herein the prophecies fulfilled, and their fulfilment pointed out and proved. We may expect to see a reference to the genealogy of our Lord, to his being "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," that amazing instance of condescension, with which the first of the four Gospels opens. We may expect to see it at the same time declared with power that He was the Son of God, proved so to be by his own holy Spirit or divine nature, by the perfect excellence of the life He led, and by his resurrection from the dead.

And since "obedience to the faith, among all nations" was within the scope of St. Paul's apostleship, we may take unto ourselves, and apply unto ourselves the name, and salutation, which he gives to all the members of the church that was then at Rome. Called we have been of Jesus Christ, "called to be saints." Invited we have been, and are, to believe and to obey, to be saved from the wrath to come, and to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. And unto us is proclaimed "grace," "and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace and peace; not the one without the other; not help to holiness without also help to happiness, not happiness without first holiness in the heart, implanted and nourished by the Spirit of the Lord; not the one without the other, but both together does St. Paul desire for the Romans, both together would he pray for us, and help us to attain. May the words of this his letter to the Romans minister at once to our growth in grace, and to our establishment in peace! May the doctrines herein revealed, and the commandments here enforced, at once add speed to our proficiency, and give rest unto our souls!

St. Paul desireth to preach the Gospel at Rome.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve || with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together * with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit † among

you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written,—"The just shall live by faith."

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest ‡ in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

|| Or, in my spirit.

* Or, in you.

† Or, in you.

‡ Hab. 2. 4.

§ Or, to them.

§ 446. *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all believers.*

Most joyful it must be and pleasant for a Christian minister to give thanks unto God for the faith and holiness of those, whom he prays for without ceasing. And the people also should be thankful for the help they have of ministers, and should pray for them, as St. Paul bade those whom he addressed pray for him, and for his fellow workers in the ministry. See 1 Thess. 5. 25. For the benefit, as it is here expressed, is mutual; "that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith of both you and me." Carefully we must avoid that dependency on the ministry of man, which would lead us to forget the ordinance of Christ, and which amounts to what St. Jude in another case describes, the "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." Jude 16. But with this caution, and with a deep conviction that we owe to the appointment and authority of our Lord all the help we have from the ministry of men, we cannot too highly esteem them that minister, for the sake of the holy work they have to do. See 1 Thess. 5. 13. Nor can they, for their part, be too deeply impressed with the obligation they lie under, to preach the Gospel, unto every creature; see Mark 16. 15; to be instant in season, and out of season, that they may have much fruit among their people.

This was the heart's desire of St. Paul towards the Romans. He resolved to know nothing amongst those whom he visited, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. See 1 Cor. 2. 2. And full as Rome was of idolatry, and of false philosophy, full of the pomps and vanities of the world, he was not even there "ashamed of the gospel of Christ." He desired to go and preach it in the capital of the world. He longed to see the converts who were already there. He felt himself in debt till he had made known this truth "both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." And this was the ground of his anxiety: the Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." These words deserve our particular attention. For as they set forth the chief motive of the apostle, in wishing to preach the Gospel at Rome, they express also his chief intent in writing to the Romans, the chief subject of this whole Epistle.

Here then we shall find these two fundamental positions particularly set forth; first that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," that it is mighty through God's grace to save us from sin, and from eternal death; and secondly, that it is able to save all, that it is God's design to extend this salvation, through the merits of his Son, unto all, of whatever family or nation they may be, unto "every one that believeth."

What an enlivening thought was this for St. Paul, that he was a chosen vessel in the hands of the Almighty, to make known such gracious tidings; and that by declaring them to the capital of the world, he might help many in all nations to believe! On the one hand he beheld the world lost in sin. On the other he saw mankind redeemed through Christ. On the one hand there was revealed the wrath of God, "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," against all who did wrong, whether Jews or Gentiles, having had it in their power to know better. On the other hand was revealed, no less clearly, "the righteousness of God," his settled purpose to pardon sinners for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. But this righteousness was revealed "from faith to faith." They only who believe in it, are sure to profit by it; they only who believe so as to grow in grace, so as to go on from first believing in this righteousness of God, unto believing all, and loving all, and doing all, that He has been pleased to tell us in his word. Oh how eager ought this to make us, to hear the truth ourselves, how anxious to have it preached unto all mankind! God grant that we who know the truth may never hinder it by unrighteousness! God grant that both to us, and to all who know the Gospel, it may prove, by means of faith, the power of God unto salvation!

How the Gentiles were without excuse.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and God-head; || so that they are without excuse :

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible ¹ God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves :

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections : for even their women did change the natu-

ral use into that which is against nature :

27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

28 And even as they did not like * to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to † a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, ‡ without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful :

32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but ¶ have pleasure in them that do them.

|| Or, *that they may be.* ¹ Ps. 106. 20. * Or, *to acknowledge.* † Or, *a mind void of judgment.* ‡ Or, *unsociable.* ¶ Or, *consent with them.*

§ 447. *Against loving darkness rather than light.*

St. Paul stated as one ground of his anxiety to preach the Gospel, the revelation of God's wrath from heaven against sin. See ver. 18. He here shews how large a portion of mankind were liable to this wrath, how grievously they had sinned against light and knowledge, how much they might have known and did not, how unthankful they were with such knowledge as they had. For what could be more gross unthankfulness, than to give the glory which was due to the Creator, sometimes to the most abject of his creatures, and sometimes to idols, the work of their own hands? What could argue more utter falsehood in their hearts, than when they knew who it was that made all these things, to bow down before "birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," or to "an image made like to corruptible man?" And what could be more fitting punishment, for those who thus changed the glory of God, alienated from Him the honour due unto his name, than that they should be given up to dishonour their own bodies between themselves? The vile affections to which God gave up so large a portion of mankind "for this cause," should make us sensible of the great sinfulness of idolatry. And the fact that it was "through the lusts of their own hearts" that they were thus given up, should lead us to reflect with shame and sorrow, on the grievous wickedness of which we all are capable, to which we all are prone, and from which nothing can render us secure, but the knowledge and the love of God.

"Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." Here we are plainly told what was the root of the whole evil. It was the corrupted inclination of mankind. It was their loving darkness rather than light. They preferred to have for gods, such beings as might be supposed to look favourably upon sin; this they preferred to owning themselves the servants of One who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. See Hab. 1. 13. And this we know is still the root of unbelief. This is at the bottom of all the various corruptions of the truth, which have prevailed to a great extent amongst professing Christians. Men do not like to retain in their knowledge that true doctrine, which allows not the very least of sin; that genuine Gospel of God, which represents Him to be so holy, and just, and good, as to have required no less than the death of his ever blessed Son, to atone for the iniquity of mankind.

In what a hateful light do even the least of our transgressions appear, when they are seen to have added agony to the sufferings of our Lord! What monsters of unthankfulness ought we to seem in our own eyes, if we are still guilty of any of these more gross offences, when we know that they have cost even the death of Christ! How apt shall we also be to disbelieve the judgment of God, if we are aware that besides doing such things ourselves, we "have pleasure in them that do them!" But in vain should we disbelieve. The judgment will come. The wrath of God is revealed and will take effect. Let us therefore fly for refuge to that righteousness of God which is by faith. From the terrors of his justice against ourselves, let us appeal to his justice satisfied in the blood of Christ. Let us believe that it is satisfied. Let us believe so as to love. Let us believe so as to obey. Let us believe so as to love to obey, so as to like to retain God in our knowledge, so as to delight in loving God in our hearts.

The Jew also inexcusable.

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

6 ² Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not

obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the * Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the † Gentile:

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

13 (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, || their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts ¶ the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

¹ Jam. 5. 3.

² Ps. 62. 12. Matt. 16. 27. Rev. 22. 12.

|| Or, the conscience witnessing with them.

* Gr. Greek.

† Gr. Greek.

¶ Or, between themselves.

§ 448. *That there is no respect of persons with God.*

The Gentiles having been already brought in guilty of sin, St. Paul turns in this chapter to the Jews; who were accustomed to count other men at enmity with God, and themselves comparatively safe, even when they committed the very same offences. These were the notions which most hardened their hearts against receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For as they did not apprehend that the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against unrighteousness of theirs, see ch. 1. 18, they could not see the necessity of the Gospel, nor feel that it was unto themselves "the power of God unto salvation." Ch. 1. 16. And therefore they were here reminded, that for this very reason they were inexcusable, because they enjoyed the light of revelation, whereby they were able to judge others. For the judgment of God is according to truth against all evil doers, without respect of persons. And the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, are manifested on purpose to lead men to repentance. And if they who know not the Law were to do the things enjoined therein, these would come to "glory, honour, and peace." Whilst they who know it, and do it not, will receive "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish."

What a striking account is here given us of the day of judgment! It is "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." It is the day when the justice of God's sentence against sin will be made manifest to the world. Already has that sentence gone forth. Already does God see the wickedness of the wicked; and determine of the soul which sinneth that it shall die. The opening of the books will be required, not by way of informing Him who now knows all, but for the justifying of his judgments to his assembled creatures. Again, St. Paul describes the end of all things earthly, as "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Not only they who are seen to do evil, but they who in their secret hearts act contrary to the will of God; they who cherish in the soul thoughts of sin, which nothing hinders them from committing but the fear of man, these also must then be put to shame. "By Jesus Christ;" He is to be the Judge. He who died for us on the cross will then call us to account, how we have requited his inestimable love. "According to my gospel;" according to the Gospel which St. Paul was commissioned to preach; with no allowances for frailty, yet with free pardon on repentance; with free justification for faith, but with no excuse in sin.

"For there is no respect of persons with God." The Jew might not boast against the Gentile, neither may the Christian boast against the unbeliever, neither may one Christian boast against another, as being chosen out of any personal favour unto life eternal. The Gentiles which have not the Law are a law unto themselves. Their private estimate of right and wrong, and their public laws for the repression of crime, these shew some discernment of the will of God, whereby they must be judged in the end. How much more then have we to answer for? How much more sore punishment must we, when we sin, deserve! We know that the goodness of God ought to lead us to repentance. We know that the very wrath which He has revealed against unrighteousness is designed to make us righteous. How then dare we any longer resist his will, when the punishment of disobedience is as sure as that God is good? How can we refrain from repenting, and loving, and obeying, when our forgiveness is as certain as that Christ has died?

The privileges of the Jew contrasted with his practice.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

18 And knowest *his* will, and || approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law ;

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is ¹ written.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

|| Or, *triest the things that differ.*

¹ Is. 52. 5. Ezek. 36. 20. 23.

§ 449. *That outward practice must proceed from principle within.*

The privileges of the Jews led them to put their trust in their Law, to make their boast of God, that they were his chosen people, that they knew his will, that they could discern right from wrong, and were competent in this matter to be guides to the blind, and instructors of the foolish. Thus they became at once proud and censorious, whilst their own conduct was no better than that which they condemned. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" This faithful reproof St. Paul follows up by pointing out some of the sins most common among the Jews, stealing, adultery, and sacrilege. These offences had been previously noted by our Lord. For He laid it to their charge that they made his Father's house a den of thieves. See Matt. 21. 13. And He pointed out how they were guilty of adultery in their ordinary practice of divorce. See Matt. 5. 32. Thus whilst they made their boast of the Law, they were dishonouring God by breaking the Law. And thus the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles through them.

This is one of the most grievous consequences of being enlightened in the truth of God, without growing in the love of Him and in the doing of his will. And grievously is this consequence still at work amongst them who know little of Christianity, except what they see in the lives of professing Christians. Idolaters in distant lands, not unfrequently behold in those who bear the name of Christ, a degree of profligacy which is shocking to the law written on their hearts. Nor is it otherwise amongst ourselves, in this Christian country, where unhappily there are still many who remain strangers to the power of religion in the soul. And there is no one thing that more hardens them in unbelief, than the inconsistent lives of professed believers. It is for us therefore to remember, that what was true of circumcision is true of baptism, that what was true of the Law is true of the Gospel, and that he is not a Christian which is one only outwardly, neither is that baptism which is only outward in the flesh. But Christian baptism and Christian religion, is "of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

And in these expressions we would by no means disparage the outward ordinance of baptism, any more than did St. Paul mean to deny the importance of circumcision to the Jews. That which God has ordered, man is bound to do, whether it be inward in the spirit, or outward in the flesh. Only we must not mistake the intention of God's ordinance. We must never suppose that we have in any degree fulfilled his will, by doing outwardly what we feel not inwardly. No, it is in the heart that He requires our obedience, in the soul within the heart, in that which lives and feels when the heart has ceased to beat. There it is that God sees whether we believe in Christ, whether we repent and obey the Gospel.

And this is the way in which men estimate each other. They look to motives and intentions, as far as they can reasonably infer them. They expect of the professors of religion somewhat more than decent outward conduct. And if they find us no less covetous than themselves, no less vain, proud, irritable, or revengeful, the name of God will be blasphemed through us, and the Gospel of Christ dishonoured. What a weighty consideration is this for us, not only as we are Christians compared with heathens, but as we are Christians possessing eminent advantages, compared with other Christian countries, families, or sects! How surely will God's name be blasphemed through us, if we shew not in our lives that we largely profit by our intimate acquaintance with the truth! And how greatly will our own glory and our joy be multiplied, if we so make our light to shine before men, that they learn from what good works they see in us to glorify our Father which is in heaven!

The advantage of having the oracles of God.

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?

2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, 'That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

8 And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that

1 Ps. 51. 4.

good may come? whose damnation is just.

9 What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before *proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

* Gr. charged.

§ 450. *The testimony of the Scriptures against sin.*

St. Paul having shewn how much the sinfulness of the Jews was aggravated by their light and knowledge, declared that in respect of liability to punishment there was "no respect of persons with God." Chap. 2. 11. "What advantage then hath the Jew?" might be reasonably asked, or what advantage has the Christian, if according to our greater talents we must expect to give account hereafter? In either case the answer is strictly true, "Much every way." In either case it is an eminent advantage to have the oracles of God committed to us, to know what the will of God is, to be taught how good He is, how great, how sure to punish, how willing to forgive. And how much greater every way is our advantage, to have also the covenant of grace, to be assured of help that we may do what we know, to have access unto the Father through the Son, by the Spirit which He has given us! See Eph. 2. 18.

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Can it derogate from the glory of God's faithfulness and truth? It is our own fault. It is the fault of them which believe not. We are guilty, and we must answer for the sin. The righteousness of God still stands good. The righteous method, by which He has decreed to save the children of men, is still deserving of our utmost thanks. God is true, though we are false. God is good, though we are wicked. And the more we are wicked, and false, and faithless, we do but prove the more his wisdom, goodness, and love, in offering to redeem us from iniquity. But may we hence conclude that we shall therefore not be judged as sinners? May we hence argue, "Let us do evil, that good may come?" May we suppose that our sin is not sinful, because it is made to redound to God's glory in the end? By no means. The apostle positively assures us of all who would thus reason, and thus act, that their "damnation is just." God's goodness does but make our sin more sinful; especially if we sin the more because we count upon forgiveness. To sin no more for very shame, to obey with zeal out of thankfulness and love, this is what ought to come of our knowing from God's word the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus. And this was the use which the Jews, according to the measure of their knowledge, might have derived from their acquaintance with the oracles of God.

But might they therefore argue, as they used commonly to do, that they were better than the Gentiles? "No, in no wise." For the apostle had already shewn, that in point of fact they were guilty of the like sins. They had advantage in the Law, but they abused it. They had profit in circumcision, but they turned it into loss. And therefore instead of being better they were worse. And here St. Paul confirms from their own Scriptures this grievous account of their delinquency, for the truth of which he had before appealed to the consciences of the Jews. "As it is written." What a fearful writing this must seem to Christians who still practise what is here set down! What a faithful picture do these words present, of what still commonly prevails in the Christian community! Who is there that is now righteous? who that seeketh after God? who that is profitable unto Him? How many tongues now use deceit! How many mouths are full of cursing and bitterness! How many feet are swift to shed blood! How few know the way of peace! Never may we cease from that fear of God, which is most closely connected with the love of Him, from that fear of transgressing his commandments, which is all one with the love of his word and will! Never may we mistake the way of peace, nor in the end fall short of that "righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ!"

God's method of justification in the Gospel.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become *||* guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath *†* set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the *‡* remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

29 *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30 Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

|| Or, subject to the judgment of God.

† Or, fore-ordained.

‡ Or, passing over.

§ 451. *Some chief uses of our being justified by faith through Christ.*

The Jews were convicted of sin by the oracles of God committed to their charge; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." All the passages above quoted from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and many others like to them, ought to have convinced the Jews of their manifold offences. Thus every mouth should have been stopped. For thus all the world stood guilty before God. And thus the world was more deeply in need of that way of salvation through faith in Christ, which the apostle here so earnestly recommends. This he had before called "the gospel of Christ." Chap. 1. 16. Here it is "the righteousness of God without the law;" and "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ." And what this means we shall understand aright, if first we feel that "all have sinned," next that we are "justified," counted righteous, and this freely by the grace or free gift of God, and next that it is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

There is no difference: "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This ~~let~~ us first feel deeply of ourselves. Let us lay to heart how greatly we have sinned, and against a law how manifest and true, against a God how great and good! Next let us believe that we are justified, or counted righteous, sinners though we are, regarded as righteous by Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. See Hab. 1. 13. "Justified freely," not for any worthiness of our own, but "by his grace," by the free gift and mercy of God, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation," to be a sacrifice for our sins, to reconcile us to the Father, "through faith in his blood," through our believing in his sacrifice, through our believing that by his stripes we are healed. And this is in order to declare the righteousness of God, to make it manifest that He is righteous in forgiving us our sins, to satisfy all who are capable of observing what He does, that He is just in justifying the ungodly.

This then is one great end and use of our believing in the atonement once made upon the cross by the death of Jesus Christ. It satisfies our minds, of what otherwise we could scarcely have conceived, that God can, consistently with his perfect goodness, blot out and utterly forgive those many most grievous sins, of which our consciences accuse us. Oh how could we dare to live in his presence, how much less could we bear the thought of dying, if we had not this firm assurance in our Lord, that through Him we are reconciled to God? Another chief use of this great doctrine is, that it humbles the heart of the believer. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." We can no longer be proud of our own doings. For here we learn that it is for no worth of ours, but only for the sake of Jesus Christ, that God can ever look on us as righteous. We can no longer be proud of our own privileges. For here we learn that God is the God of all, circumcision and uncircumcision, Jews and Gentiles, Christians and heathens. To all He offers graciously the same terms of love, that they may be saved through faith in Christ. Oh how can we who know these gracious offers be so slow to make them known to others? How, if we care not to declare them to our brethren, how can we be valuing them ourselves? Lastly we here learn that this doctrine of salvation does not make void the Law, but establishes it. It establishes the law written on the hearts of men, for it confirms and enlightens the conscience. It establishes the Law written in the Old Testament, for it fulfils every type and prophecy, and enforces every duty due to God and to our neighbour. And above all it establishes that most perfect of all laws, "the law of liberty," as St. James calls it, 1. 25, 2. 12, the law of God's way and will revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For what can so strongly bind us, what so effectually move us to do what God would have us, as the persuasion that through his free gift we are counted righteous though sinners, and also enabled by his grace to sin no more?

The Gospel doctrine foreshewn in Abraham and David.

1 What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7 *Saying*, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say

that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he *had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he *had being yet* uncircumcised.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

§ 452. *The blessedness of being forgiven.*

That we are justified through faith is a doctrine as old as David, as old as Abraham. It was the way in which God dealt with Abraham, in justifying him. It was the way in which David felt that he had been dealt with, when he described his own blessedness in the forgiveness of his sins. These are the points on which St. Paul here dwells, by way of satisfying the minds of Jewish Christians, with whom the authority of David and of Abraham had the utmost weight. And thus he argues: "if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory." For if any man could by his own strength do works acceptable unto God, works, such ~~as~~ would entitle him to a reward from God, this reward would be a debt due from God to man, and man would have to glory, not God. But Abraham had no such ground to glory "before God." For the Scripture expressly testified that it was his believing which was counted unto him for righteousness. See Gen. 15. 6. And this exactly agrees with the description given in the last chapter, of God's justifying them that believe in Christ. And therewith agrees, in like manner, David's description of the blessedness of the man, "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

And further from the case of Abraham it is argued, that this blessedness belonged not to them only who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but to all also who should be heirs of his faith, Gentiles as well as Jews. For it was whilst Abraham was yet uncircumcised, that his believing was counted to him for righteousness. Circumcision was a seal or sign of his faith, and of the promise of God made to him on believing. But this seal was not ordained till after he had believed. So that he could not have been counted righteous by virtue of circumcision; nor could the Jews be so esteemed, as they vainly thought they could, through means of this or any other legal ordinance. For if it had been so, "faith is made void." The promise of God, to justify them that believe, would be "made of none effect," either if any works, such as men can do, would justify them, or if none could be justified without that perfect obedience of the heart, which no man can make good. "Because the law worketh wrath;" the law convicts every man of sin. The law, whether it be written on our hearts, or revealed by Moses, or confirmed by Christ, convinces us of what otherwise we should never know, that we are sinners in God's sight, liable to his wrath for ever.

Let us flee then to the promises of God. Let us take shelter in the refuge of his mercy. Let us, when most we feel the consciousness of sin, cling most closely to the hope of his forgiveness. Let our highest object of desire be "the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Not to be counted righteous for our own deservings, not to earn the crown of glory by any work or worth of ours, let not this be what we aim at, think of, wish for; this let us not deem possible, or count to be desirable. No, certainly God's way is better far than ours. Sinners we are. Sinners we always have been. Sinners we shall continue to be as long as life shall last. And can it be that our iniquities are forgiven? Can it be that our sins are covered? Can it be that God sees them not, remembers them no more? Oh, the goodness of Him who thus forgives! Oh, the boundless love of Him who thus pleads for our forgiveness! Oh, the hardness of our hearts that we can forget our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us! Oh, the joy and peace of believing that Christ died for us, that Christ lives to make intercession for us, that Christ gives us freely all things to enjoy, and that God has for Christ's sake forgiven us our sins!

Abraham the father of them that believe.

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all; *

17 (As it is written, 'I have made thee a father of many nations,) || before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, 'So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's

womb :

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

¹ Gen. 17. 5.

|| Or, like unto him.

² Gen. 15. 5.

§ 453. *How we also ought to believe.*

Faith, we know "was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness." Ver. 9. And it is to them which believe that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Why this is the case is here set forth; in order that it may be by grace, in order that the salvation of man may be the free and gracious gift of Almighty God. Here therefore we must observe that it is not for our faith's sake, any more than for our work's sake, that we are justified in the sight of God. No; it is his free gift. He freely forgives us all. It is for Christ's sake. And Christ is God. The Father and the Son are one. See John 10. 30. Let us take care then that we trust not in our faith, that we ascribe not to our faith that worth which belongs to no one thing in us. The very reason of our salvation being connected with our faith is that we should ascribe the whole to God. Let us then believe that the whole is God's work; and let us believe that He will do it all. Let us trust that all unworthy as we are, we may be counted worthy for Christ's sake. And when we thus really trust, how can we help to love? And were we thus to love in earnest, how could we be reluctant to obey?

And not only is it helpful to the glory of God's goodness that we should be justified freely on believing; it is no less necessary for the manifestation of his truth, "to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed;" Gentile as well as Jew. Only by this means could be fulfilled the promise of God to Abraham, the father of the faithful. "For it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him." It was not promised to Abraham alone, that his faith should be reckoned for righteousness. Nor was it promised to the Jews alone, as they vainly imagined; though they might have known the reverse, from what was written, "I have made thee a father of many nations."

But in him it was also promised to all, of all nations, who should become inheritors of his faith. And therefore it was useful to the fulfilment of God's promise that their faith should also be counted to them for righteousness. And therefore to us it will be counted "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences," put to death by reason of our sins; "and raised again for our justification," or, because by his death our pardon had been secured. For it was for this cause that death had no more dominion over "the Lord's body," 1 Cor. 11. 29, and that He arose again from the dead.

These then are the chief things we have to believe. And how we must believe in them we may learn further from what is here set down of Abraham's faith. He believed in God "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." He was aware, it seems, that what has once been uttered by God's word is the same as if it were already done. He "against hope believed in hope;" against his wish that Ishmael might find favour in God's sight, see Gen. 17. 18, he believed in the birth of another son. He considered not the improbability of the circumstances. He reasoned not that it was against the course of nature. Or if he reasoned, he subdued the inclination to doubt; and was fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform." Such must be the vigour of our faith, such its firmness, such its fullness of persuasion. Has God told us of forgiveness? Let us feel ourselves forgiven. Has He spoken of life and immortality? Let us live as though we were now in heaven. Has He assured us of grace sufficient for us? Let us work as though we felt Him working with us. Has He promised the Holy Spirit to make us holy? Let us regard ourselves as already holy unto the Lord. Weak though we be, and conscious of infirmity, ashamed of our many past offences, and ill qualified by natural ability to influence the conduct of our neighbours, has God bidden us to edify one another, and to love no less than all men? Then let us not doubt that through his blessing on the means we use, we shall become as spiritual parents, fathers in the Lord, to many who might else not know his love.

The blessedness of being justified through faith.

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, || in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

|| Or, according to the time.

§ 454. *That we have peace and joy in believing.*

In order to impress on us the value of those benefits which we derive through the mercy of God in Christ, the apostle here divides them into several sorts, and distinguishes the one from the other. We are justified by faith. We are counted just, though sinners; our sins, though they were as scarlet, become white as snow; the record that was against us is blotted out; and this upon our believing in the atonement of our Lord. How this is, has been already shewn. Here we see, that besides this first great benefit, we have also "joy and peace in believing." Ch. 15. 13. "We have peace with God." We no longer feel at enmity with our best of friends. We are no longer at variance with our Maker. We no longer desire to do the very reverse of that which He would have us. We no longer regard with fear the day of his appearing. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." For it is through the Son that we are thus reconciled to the Father, enabled to approach unto Him as sons, and to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is the second chief advantage here insisted on, our spiritual joy. And this joy we have in many ways, even here on earth, where we should else have only sorrow. First, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We have joy in the promise of God's glory, in the confident expectation that we shall soon enter into heaven, there to dwell with Him in everlasting joy. The prospect of this inheritance, the conviction that it is ours, the feeling that each day and moment of our lives brings us nearer and nearer to enjoying it, how light must this make our present sorrows, how must it fill our hearts with gladness. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." We have joy not only notwithstanding our sorrow, but in our sorrow. We are glad to be afflicted. For now we know that pain is sent us for our good. And now we know how to use affliction for the increase of patience, and patience for the growth of experience, and experience for the enlarging of our hope, and hope for our assurance against the risk of shame. Thus the more we suffer, we are the more assured that when this light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall be over, we shall be brought not to shame but unto glory, when the day of the Lord shall come. And this blessed fruit of our afflictions, that they minister to the increase of our joy, comes of the love of God being "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." It is not our doing, but God's. It is not our work, but the work of the Spirit. And therefore, as St. Paul has elsewhere written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1. 31.

A third and chief subject of our spiritual rejoicing is the sacrifice of the death of Christ; "we have joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." We are to conceive ourselves helpless through sin, and hopeless, sentenced to endless misery. We are to think of the love of Him who in this our lost estate submitted to die in our behalf. We are to note how He died for us while we were yet sinners. We are to remember how hard we find it to be kind to the unthankful and evil, how strange we should suppose it, and incredible, that one man would die for the benefit of another. We are to know that Christ did thus die for us, that by his death we were reconciled to God, by his blood justified; and that by his living, rising again from the dead, giving us his Spirit, and ever living to make intercession for us, we shall be made holy, and so saved from the wrath to come. And then we shall feel what it is to have joy in God through Christ, then we shall "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1. 8. For what can more gladden the heart, than to feel, that however far we have been estranged from One, who is our Master, Friend, and Father, we have been now restored to his affection, by means no less strange, and sure, and powerful, than the death of his own Son, as our all sufficient sacrifice?

Lord, help us to believe that thus it is! Lord, help us to have peace and joy in our belief! Lord, help us, by thy grace, to that holiness of life, without which there can be no peace nor joy in believing!

The extent of redemption through Christ.

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, || for that all have sinned:

13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is the gift*: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

|| *Or, in whom.*

* *Or, by one offence.*

17 For if * by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore as † by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so ‡ by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

† *Or, by one offence.*

‡ *Or, by one righteousness.*

§ 455. *That grace abounds more than sin.*

Thus far St. Paul has proved, what at the outset of this Epistle he declared, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. But there was no question more agitated amongst those to whom he wrote than this; unto whom this salvation belonged? And therefore as he had before declared, that it is "to every one that believeth," ch. 1. 16, so he here maintains that the atonement wrought for us by the death of Christ, extends as widely as the guilt entailed on us by the fall of Adam. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." This was the commencement of our misery. "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This was what followed. The children of Adam, though they did not all transgress as he did against a law most manifestly revealed, yet all sinned, as may be known from this fact, that all became subject unto death. "For until the law sin was in the world," even before the written law was given from on high; only it was not then so plainly charged against man; "sin is not imputed where there is no law." This then was the extent of misery which through one man entered into the world. All sinned. All died.

Hence we may learn the extent of those benefits which are revealed in the Gospel. It is as large as the injury we had met with. It is larger. For "not as the offence, so also is the free gift." Through Adam, sin and death entered into the world. But through our own sins also, all of us become subject unto death. Whereas "the gift of grace which is by one man Jesus Christ," or as it is in the original, by "the one man," this without any corresponding worth of ours, "hath abounded unto many," or rather "unto the many," that is to say, unto all except "the One." And herein is another difference, another point in which the gift of God is shewn to be more extensive than his sentence of wrath. For not only is this sentence blotted out, not only is all sin forgiven up to the moment of the sinner's coming unto God by faith, but ever afterwards there is forgiveness for our manifold transgressions assured to our sincere repentance; there is "abundance of grace," there is "the gift of righteousness;" not merely not to have our sins imputed to us, but to be actually counted righteous through God's free gift; there is not merely not to die, but to "reign in life," to live for ever in glory. All this, far more than we all lost through Adam, have we all gained, all at least who effectually believe, by One, Jesus Christ.

Thus we see in how large a sense the many are made righteous by the obedience of the One, by his being obedient unto death, by his dying for us on the cross. But still further to extol the extent of the free gift, the apostle adds; "moreover the law entered that the offence might abound." Not only was sin prevalent in the world up to the period when the law was given, but when the will of God was revealed from heaven, when the wrath of God against the disobedience of man was certified by signs and wonders, was declared in express articles of charge against each particular head of our offences: even then did man continue to transgress; and then was his transgression so much the more sinful, as he sinned more against the knowledge vouchsafed to him by God. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The more thoroughly, the more largely all mankind are thus proved guilty before God, so much the more abundantly is God's goodness made manifest in forgiving them, for the sake of Jesus Christ. "Death reigned." And "sin hath reigned." But more wide is the reign of grace, more large is the free gift of God, than the loss and injury sustained by man. Are we then aware of our dishonour, of our danger, of our fall? Let us become alike sensible of our recovery. Are we sure that we are sinners? Let us be no less sure that in Christ we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins. Let us feel as they that are free from sin, nay more, as they that are counted righteous. Let us live as they that are set at liberty from the power of death, nay rather are assured that they shall live for ever "by Jesus Christ our Lord."

That we may not sin for grace to abound.

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as *||* were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is ** freed from sin.*

|| Or, are.

** Gr. justified.*

+ Gr. arms, or, weapons.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also *live* with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin *once*: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your members *as* *†* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

§ 456. *That we should reckon ourselves dead to sin.*

St. Paul was aware that the doctrine he had to preach was liable to abuse. It had already led to the slanderous report, that he had taught, "Let us do evil, that good may come." Ch. 3. 8. He would now therefore shew us how far it is from loosening the bonds of duty. He would prove that the faith which justifies, affords the best of all security for the love which obeys. Let us remember that his reasonings apply not to those only who mistake his doctrine, and hold that it is consistent with continuing in sin, but to them also, who, holding the reverse, do continue in sin notwithstanding.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" This is the first form of the objection. This is the pretext on which many from that early day till now would evade the force of Christian duty. This is the plea which had been previously exposed, that "if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God," ch. 3. 5, then the more we do evil, there would come of it the more good, and thus we had better sin than not. But see in what solemn words St. Paul protests against such gross abuse of Gospel truth. "God forbid." Never do Thou, who rulest over all, permit this delusion to deceive! Never wilt Thou allow such wilful self-deceit to pass for an excuse in sin. "God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" This is the first ground of reason against this wicked and absurd objection. We Christians are dead to sin. At our baptism we were baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. We were devoted to a life of self-denial. We were bound to live henceforth even as Christ lived, and to be ready even to die as He died. This must have been a striking argument to the primitive believers, who were for the most part converted in maturity of years, and baptized by complete immersion in the water. For to them such baptism must have most aptly signified the being "planted together in the likeness of" the death of Christ, and also of his resurrection. If we through God's mercy have been in infancy made partakers of the same inestimable gifts, and if in our climate there is allowed a method of applying water more safe for the health of the body, let us remember that the ordinance of baptism has still the same influence on the soul, that we are still baptized into the death of Christ, and ought still to be so dead to sin as to be unable to live therein any longer. "Our old man," "the body of sin," the sinful body, the lusts of the flesh, and the fleshly lusts of the soul, all these we must consider to be crucified with Christ. All these we must count for dead, so that they can no longer serve sin. To that tyrant they are naturally slaves. But death sets the captive free. And he that is as dead to sin, will serve sin no longer. And as Christ "being raised from the dead dieth no more;" so we, if we have truly risen with Him to newness of life, must live unto God for ever. The slave is not only set free by death from the bondage of his master upon earth. He is admitted into a new life where sin reigns no more, and where "death hath no more dominion over him."

"Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we see how we are to apply this reasoning to ourselves. It is by faith. We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin. This is the way to be so. We are to reckon ourselves alive unto God. This is the way to live to Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To believe that we are free is the first point in our deliverance. To act as if we were free is the second. "Let not sin therefore reign." "Neither yield ye your members." "But yield yourselves unto God." These are our directions. And these directions prove that we have power to act. We are slaves no longer. "Sin shall not have dominion over" us. And why? Because we are "not under the law, but under grace." God's love has set us free. God's help can keep us free. Our chains are broken. Our prison doors are opened. Our liberty is secured. And our deliverance is no less than this: we are free to sin no more.

That we may not sin because we are under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine || which was delivered you.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your

members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free † from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

|| Gr. *whereto ye were unto.*

† Gr. *to righteousness.*

§ 457. *How zealously we ought to serve the Lord.*

“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” Here is another pretext, like unto the one last answered, and both put forward to uphold the same fatal falsehood, that under the Gospel we may sin in safety. How common is this fallacy amongst ourselves! How many count it for the chief of Christian privileges, that they may sin with more hope of mercy! How many have no other notion of Christianity at all, than that it opens to sinners a wider door of forgiveness! How few seem to be aware that it has for a higher object to sanctify us unto God a peculiar people, zealous of good works! See Tit. 2. 14. Sin is not to be desired, even if we might sin safely. Sin is to be abhorred, even if it were not sure to lead to punishment. The hatefulness and sinfulness of sin are to be estimated by the value of the sacrifice which it cost, the sacrifice of the death of Christ. We are to set his form before our eyes, his visage so marred more than that of any man, his crown of thorns, his cross, his dying agony. We are to remember that He was God manifest in the flesh. We are to set before our thoughts what love this needs must be, that such an one as this should die for us. We are to know that by virtue of his death we enjoy, if we believe, eternal life. And we shall then feel what is meant by being under grace. And can we then think this a reason for continuing in sin?

No, we shall rejoice to think that we are no longer servants “of sin unto death,” but “of obedience unto righteousness.” We shall be thankful for ability to obey as well as believe, that form of doctrine which has been delivered to us. We shall be willing “servants of righteousness.” And we shall yield our members servants “unto holiness,” with at least as much alacrity, affection, and desire, as by nature we manifest for uncleanness and iniquity. “Even so.” This the apostle speaks “after the manner of men, because of the infirmity” of our flesh. Else, if we were not frail, and fallible, and foolish, he might justly have said, Much more. And thus doubtless he would have us to apply what he has said; that we should now devote ourselves to the work of God with tenfold diligence, beyond what we ever exercised in the work of Satan. But how far is this from wishing still to sin! How far from arguing that by reason of our privileges, therefore we might sin safely!

And further to carry on the comparison, and to satisfy us that the service of the Lord ought to raise in us not merely as much zeal, but infinitely more, than the service of iniquity, we are here referred to the wages of the two opposite situations. “When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” We cannot at once serve God and mammon. When we are servants of righteousness we are also free from sin. Which had we rather serve? Which rather be free from? Let us look to the fruit of each, to the end of each, to the wages of each. The fruit of sin is shame, the end and wages, death. The fruit of righteousness is that we are made holy. The end is everlasting life. The wages, no, not the wages, but the gift of God, his free and gracious gift, is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. See then how much is here to win our preference. To be made holy instead of to be made ashamed. And instead of death to have life eternal. God not only counts us just; He makes us holy. He gives us grace to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. He gives us at the end of life, not death, but an eternity of happiness, to leave this world for one that is far better, to be with Christ where He is. And this is his gift, his free gift; even unto man for the sake of Jesus Christ; not by virtue of any good that we can do, and yet not without our doing what good we can. Let us therefore do good, not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerfully, joyfully, affectionately. Let us serve out of love unto our Lord. The more we believe in God’s goodness, let us the more strive to be good like Him. The more fully we are persuaded that Christ died for us, let us the more heartily endeavour to live to Him.

Our deliverance from the Law; which however is not sin.

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the ** motions of sins*, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

* *Gr. passions.*

|| *Or, being dead to that.*

† *Or, concupiscence.*

6 But now we are delivered from the law, || that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known *† lust*, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which *was ordained to life*, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

§ 458. *That holiness is necessary and attainable.*

That holiness is necessary under the Gospel, and more attainable than under the Law, these things are here further set forth, first by its being shewn that henceforth we are exempt from the Law, and next by a declaration of what effect the Law has actually produced. It may help to a right view of the apostle's argument if we consider the latter point first. If then our being "delivered from the Law" is a reason for our no longer serving sin, must we not hence conclude that the Law is sin? "God forbid." The sin is not in the Law, but in us who sin against the Law. The Law, whether it be that which the Gentiles were unto themselves, or that which was revealed by means of Moses to the Jews, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." The Law came down from heaven. It was given unto man by God. It is the expression of that which God would have us do. It is the distinction of what is right from what is wrong, of what is evil from what is good, of what is true from what is false; of what is so, has been, and ever will be so; of what God so counts for ever. Never therefore may we refuse to honour and obey the Law of the Lord! Never may we hesitate to love that which God commands, nor fail to obtain that which He has promised!

But can we obtain the joys of heaven by obeying the commandments? We cannot. For we cannot obey. "This do, and thou shalt live," Luke 10. 28, is undoubtedly true of the Law. But it is no less true, that through the corruption of our nature, we cannot do this, and therefore cannot by the Law have life. On the contrary by the Law we die. For it is the Law which convicts us of sin before God. It is the Law which convinces us within ourselves. It is the Law which makes us to be aware how surely we deserve eternal death. It is the Law which, by revealing to us what we ought to do, thus aggravates the sinfulness of all we do amiss. The Law then is from God. But the sin is ours. The Law "was ordained to life." But we found it, nay made it, to be unto death. The Law is holy. But sin is for that very reason tenfold sinful. And so deceitful is sin within our hearts, so deceitful is the heart of sinful man, that the more we are commanded to do aright, we desire so much the more to go astray. We delight in disobedience. We glory in our shame. Thus sin took occasion by the commandment to work in us more of lust against the will of God. When we knew with fulness and certainty, by the revelation of God's written Law, sin revived, and we yet more deserved death. For now entered the proud thought that we could earn our own deliverance. Now sin deceived us by the notion of self righteousness. Now sin took occasion by the commandment, not only to add to our concupiscence but to confirm our pride.

This is the state to which sin had brought all mankind under the Law. This is the bondage from which the Gospel is able to deliver all mankind. And from this bondage it delivers us by delivering us from the Law, not from the obligation to be holy, but from the curse which the Law awards to the slightest transgression. Transgress, and thou shalt die, is the sentence of the Law. Believe, and thou shalt live, repent, and thy sins shall be blotted out, is the gracious assurance of the Gospel. The Law therefore is dead. Or rather it lives anew in the Gospel. We are still bound as in marriage. But our spouse is Christ. We are "married to another." Through that other we must "bring forth fruit unto God." For the end of our deliverance is this, "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Guard us then, we pray Thee, most gracious Lord, from abusing thy great goodness made known to us in the Gospel. The more Thou hast set us free, let us the more freely, cheerfully, and thankfully observe thy pleasure and obey thy will.

That it is not the Law which is made death to us.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I *allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from || the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

* Gr. know.

|| Or, this body of death.

§ 459. *The conflict between the flesh and the spirit.*

"God forbid," was the answer given by the apostle to the question, "Is the law sin?" Ver. 7. And he declared that to the contrary "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Ver. 12. But if the law be not sinful, it seems to be the cause of death, or at least an objector might so suppose. "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid." Most solemnly St. Paul again protests against any interpretation of his doctrine, which would in the least degree disparage the law of God, or lessen our respect for his commandments. The law is not made death to us. It is not the law written on our hearts, it is not the law revealed to patriarchs of old, it is not the law written by Moses, it is not the law enlarged upon by the prophets fulfilled by Christ, and again set forth by the apostles, it is not this pure and perfect will of God most high, it is not that which has been made death to us. Thus much we may know from our own conviction, that the law is spiritual: from our own conscience, which hates the very things we do, and thus consents unto the law, that it is good. No, it is our own inbred perversity, it is the lust of the flesh that is made death unto us, and that takes occasion by the commandment to deceive and slay us. See ver. 11. It is "I am carnal, sold under sin." Or rather, it is not I, but that which is the worst part of me, though not usually the weakest part of me, "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

We are as it were two men, each one of us. We are as it were two wills; one which consents to sin, and one which allows it not: one which is greedy of iniquity, and one which hates it; one, which is or ought to be, which is sin that dwelleth in us. The corrupt condition of this our sinful self,

own conscience and to the law of God, the war which it carries on within us, a the miserable captivity to which it is continually bringing us; these are what St. Paul here sets forth to us, by telling us how he affected himself. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." He tells us which self he means, his flesh, that in him which was carnal, that which whilst he knew not Christ, presided over all, that which even in them that are regenerate, still struggles for the mastery. In this our flesh still dwelleth no good thing. The good that we would, we still do not. The evil which we would not, still we do. "To will," to will aright "is present with" us. But "evil is present with" us also. Even when we "delight in the law of God after the inward man," when we have learnt from faith to love, when we feel affection for God's will, and for Himself, still we "see another law" in our members in painful conflict with the law in our minds, ever at work to bring it into captivity under its own degrading power.

O wretched men that we are, if subject to this agony of inward strife, bound daily to resist, in danger of defeat each hour of our lives, and in jeopardy of shame and discomfiture up to the very moment of our departure. O wretched men that we are, "who shall deliver us" "from the body of this death," who shall save us from this carnal self of ours, which self or flesh, and not the law of God, both is sin, see ver. 7, and is "made death unto" us? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He shall deliver us. He has delivered us. He shall save us. He is our Saviour. He is therefore also our Lord. His Gospel is the power of God, to save us, both from sin, and from death. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." This is the conclusion of the whole matter. In the Christian, in proportion as he is established in the faith, in the Christian it is the mind and not the flesh, that is "I myself." And therefore it is the law of God he serves, and not the law of sin. He draws daily more nigh to the one and further from the other. Daily he does more work for the one and less for the other. Or if it may be, and as far as it may be, he serves the one continually, and the other not at all.

The believer safe from condemnation.

1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For * to be carnally minded is death; but † to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because ‡ the carnal mind is enmity against God:

for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies ¶ by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

¶ Or, by a sacrifice for sin.

* Gr. the minding of the flesh.

† Gr. the minding of the Spirit.

‡ Gr. the minding of the flesh.

¶ Or, because of his Spirit.

§ 460. *That we are now debtors to the Spirit.*

The apostle here continues the distinction, which in the last chapter he had made, between our two selves, or the two parts of each man's own self, there called, the one the law of sin in our members; the other the inward man, but here, the one "the flesh," and the other "the spirit." And he assures us that under the Gospel "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And this is because they who are in Christ Jesus, they who are baptized according to his ordinance, and live according to their baptism, these are made "free from the law of sin and death," made free from that Law which uniformly declared, transgress, and thou shalt die. This Law, though it also offered, obey and thou shalt live, yet could not give us life. For "through the flesh," through our propensity to sin, we never could sufficiently obey. God therefore sent his Son, "in the likeness" of that flesh of ours, which is so prone to sin; sent Him "for sin," even to die for it; and thus by his death "condemned sin in the flesh," executed the sentence of condemnation against our carnal and corrupt propensities.

Hence we are no longer under that fearful sentence which rendered all exertion hopeless. Hence the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us; for we can now walk after the spirit, and not after the flesh. This is now within our power. Let us take heed then, that we now attain to it. We have seen how it is that we receive this redemption, through the death of Christ. Let us observe how we are to turn it to good account, namely, by using our liberty for his honour, by fulfilling his will to the uttermost. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." But if in us the flesh is mortified by the death of Christ, if we are "after the spirit," if the spirit in us has the mastery over the flesh, we shall mind "the things of the spirit." The one state is to be already dead; the other is to have life and peace. In the one case we live not to any profit, we derive not any benefit from the death of Christ. In the other we enjoy, through his redemption, a new life of holiness and peace. For in the one case we are still at enmity with God, still perversely bent against obeying his law. In the other, we feel that we have been reconciled; we desire to love Him who has so greatly loved us; and we try to please Him, because we know that now we can; and we succeed, because now we try.

But is our trying all that is required? May we be sure by our own exertions alone, to subdue the flesh unto the spirit, and thus to know that we are "in the spirit?" Far from it. God still must help us. It is the holy Ghost, here called "the Spirit of God," and "Spirit of Christ," it is the Holy Ghost who alone can make us holy. And as it was said of our offending flesh, "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;" ch. 7. 17; so it is now true of the same mortal body, that when it is become dead to sin, it is the Holy Spirit that leads, and guides, and rules it; it is God who quickens us by his Spirit that dwells in us. And thus the same apostle has elsewhere written, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2: 20.

This then is the kind of life to which the Gospel is to bring us. How far from a life of sin! These are they to whom there is no condemnation. How far from such as count the law for sin, how far from such as would continue in sin, in order that grace may abound! Debtors we are still, bound not by terror, but by love, not so much by the apprehension of how God will punish us by the conviction of how utterly He has forgiven. Debtors we are still, but not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. Else even after all that God has done for us in Christ, we still shall die. But it is through the Spirit of God to mortify the deeds of the body, and to bring the flesh into subjection to the spirit of the inner man, and to Christ whose Spirit is one with ours, this is what we owe, not to the flesh, but to the spirit. May God help us to pay the debt!

The believer liable to sufferings.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty

of the children of God.

22 For we know that || the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, † because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

|| Or, every creature.

¹ Luke 21. 28.

† Or, that.

§ 461. *How the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.*

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Under the Law we were not sons, but servants, or rather slaves. For the Law gave sentence of death on disobedience; and even for them that should obey it, the Law had no decided revelation of eternal life. Thus under the Law we had the spirit of bondage. But under the Gospel we have the spirit of adoption, or sonship. For the Holy Spirit of God, who leads us to obey, “beareth witness with our spirit,” joins with our own conscience, or inward man, to assure us “that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Yes; we must suffer first. We are heirs, not owners. We are children, not yet men. We are not of age to be yet masters, till first we have been chastened; not fit to be trusted with the crown of glory, till first we have been tried in the furnace of affliction. Christians are not exempt from that subjection unto vanity, that liability to decay and death, which attaches to all things here below. The grass that grows up and is cut down, the flower that soon withers, the beasts that perish, the sun that shall be turned into darkness, and the heavens that shall vanish as a scroll; these things, and such as these, do most aptly represent that misery and mortality of ours, to which they owe their own sentence of destruction. They suffer; but the fault was ours. For our sake the ground was cursed. See Gen. 3. 18. Ours was the will at enmity with God; ours the sin for which “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.” And now that the woman’s seed has bruised the serpent’s head, ours it is to wait as long as these things last, for the manifestation of the sons of God. The times of restoration of all things cannot be hastened for our present satisfaction. Even those who in the fruits of the Spirit have the earnest of eternal life, must be content to stay, till all God’s purposes are fulfilled on earth, ere they enjoy “the redemption of the body.” But then, how short is time at the very longest! How utterly unworthy are the utmost “sufferings of the present time” “to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!”

“For we are saved by hope.” The Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation.” Ch. 1. 16. But we are not to enjoy at once the whole weight of glory, which belongs to them that shall be saved. The life which we chiefly look for is to come. The inheritance to which we now become entitled is “eternal in the heavens.” 2 Cor. 5. 1. Now that which is not yet present we can only hope for, not possess. And in the meanwhile, we must wait for it in patience. We must not be surprised if we are called upon to suffer. We must not be weary in well doing. We must not be ashamed or discontented at delay. And here also it is not in strength of ours that we wait. Herein we are not left comfortless. Herein the same Holy Ghost, the Comforter, gives us confidence in our conflict, and in our weakness, strength. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” And how He helps us is here abundantly declared. He helps by helping us to pray, by praying in us, with us, for us. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” And if we ask amiss we have not what we ask. See James 4. 3. But if “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us,” with such earnestness and force as no tongue of man could else express, then God knows our meaning; for “He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.” God knows our meaning. God hears our prayers. Then we know that He hears us. “And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” † John 5. 15.

God designs for us to be conformed to the image of his Son.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that

died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, ¹ For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹ Ps. 44. 22.

§ 462. *That nothing can separate the faithful from Christ's love.*

Most gracious order of Him that ruleth over all, that the very things which make us groan within ourselves do also help us, if we love the Lord, towards receiving joy for ever! Most gracious purpose of our Father which is in heaven, that He should beforehand know and predestinate, settle and determine, to conform us to the image of his Son, to make us, like that first born among many brethren, "perfect through sufferings!" Heb. 2. 10. God be praised that He has thus predestinated us! God be praised, that He has called, justified, and glorified us; called us by the preaching of the Gospel, called us by the knowledge of the truth; justified us "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," ch. 3. 24, "through faith in his blood," ch. 3. 26; glorified us by making us first to suffer here, as our way to glory everlasting! Our sorrows, our pains, our diseases, our death, our agony of conflict with sin that dwelleth in us, our work and labour of love, and the earnest groanings of our desire to be clothed with our house from heaven; see 2 Cor. 5. 2; all these things are no more than He who is all wise, has allotted unto those whom He most highly favours, no more than He will make to work together for good, to them that love Him.

"What shall we then say to these things?" Not as Jacob in the hour of his affliction, "all these things are against me." Gen. 42. 36. Far other wise. God makes the worst that can here befall us minister to the best that we can enjoy hereafter. All these things are for us. He spared not his own Son. Christ suffered. And shall not we also suffer gladly? Christ suffered for us. And shall not we rejoice to suffer for his sake? It was good for Him to bear the agony and to despise the shame of the cross. And must it not be profitable to us to take up our cross and follow Him; to encounter for his sake rebuke and shame, the loss of friends, the enmity of the world, and the malice of our adversary the devil? In vain do men accuse us; in vain does our evil enemy seek our condemnation. We are elect, called to salvation, counted just, however great have been our sins; counted just, if we believe, for Christ's sake. God counts us just; it is enough. Christ died for us; it is abundantly sufficient. Nay, not only did He die, He "is risen again," He "is even at the right hand of God." He "also maketh intercession for us." This is more than abundantly sufficient to assure us, that notwithstanding our present sufferings, our inheritance is for ever safe; the joys we long for, hope for, wait for, are as sure as we can desire, as well as greater than we can conceive.

For hence we know the love of Christ. We know that He loved us, for He gave Himself for us. See Gal. 1. 4. And "who can separate us from the love of Christ?" Which of all the evils that here we apprehend can make "him that loved us," love us less? "God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent." Numb. 23. 19. Christ, though He be man as well as God, though He delight to call Himself "the Son of man," can neither repent nor lie. He will only love us more, for He has said He will, the more we love Him, and suffer for his sake. Thus "in all these things we are more than conquerors." For in all He loves us more. Thus neither death, nor any thing we can endure in life; neither angels, the evil angels which seek our ruin; nor principalities and powers, the same wicked spirits, which are elsewhere described as the rulers of the darkness of this world; nor things present, nothing we meet with here; nor things to come, nothing that can befall us in the valley of the shadow of death; "nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature;" nothing, no, nothing but our own wilful sin, nothing can separate us from the love of God, "which is in Christ Jesus." Oh, let not us then separate ourselves! The Father loves us. The Son died for us. The Holy Spirit helps us. Therefore to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be glory henceforth for ever.

St. Paul is grieved for the rejection of the Jews.

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were *accursed* from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh :

4 Who are Israelites ; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the *†* covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ;

5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning

|| Or, separated.

† Or, testaments.

the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel :

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are* they all children : but, ¹ In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God : but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

9 For this *is* the word of promise, ² At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

¹ Gen. 21. 12.

² Gen. 18. 10.

§ 463. *Against selfishness in our desire for salvation.*

St. Paul had said in the outset of this Epistle that the Gospel is “ the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Ch. 1. 16. This was the privilege of the Jews, precedency in point of time. Afterwards he adds, that in point of terms “ there is no difference ; ” “ the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ,” being assured in the Gospel “ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Ch. 3. 22. It is the object of these three next chapters to shew that in point of fact the Jews were in great part rejected, and the Gentiles chosen, to explain how this came to pass, and to insist upon the proofs which we might hence derive of God’s wisdom, justice, and abundant mercy. May He who ruleth over all, help us to apply aright to our own improvement this signal instance of his righteous judgment, incline us to study what He has been pleased to reveal, restrain us from all curious inquiry into that which He has thought fit to withhold, and make us at once thankful for the light which we enjoy, and anxious in behalf of those who are still in darkness !

This whole passage, however necessary for the exposition of the truth, was very likely to give offence to the Jews, in that St. Paul, himself a Jew, should thus plainly in the presence of the Gentiles, declare, in opposition to the prejudices of his people, that they were rejected, and the Gentiles chosen. And therefore he begins with a warm assurance of his own deep concern for his brethren. He protests in the most solemn manner that he has great heaviness and sorrow of heart. He declares that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his kinsmen according to the flesh. And he sets forth in a manner most acceptable to their ears, their title, “ Israelites ; ” their privileges, “ the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ; whose are the fathers,” those holy men “ of whom the world was not worthy ; ” Heb. 11. 38 ; and who, when it pleased God to be manifested in the flesh, see 1 Tim. 3. 16, were honoured by giving birth unto the Saviour of the world, “ of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Nor does the apostle state expressly the afflicting truth which weighed so heavily on his own mind, and which he knew to be so offensive to his brethren. He left it to be supplied by the understanding of his readers, that these highly favoured Israelites were notwithstanding lost. And supposing this to have been understood, he goes on to account for it, by saying, “ Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” He shews that the rejection of a part of Israel was consistent with the promises of God. For this had been the case with the promise made to Abraham, whose children were evidently not all intended in what was said of the blessedness of his seed. But, “ in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” And as it was with the children of Abraham, so was it also with those of Israel, “ the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” So is it also with the Jews ; God’s word takes full effect, his covenant with them is amply fulfilled, in the salvation of all such as are Israelites indeed, see John 1. 47, of all those whose circumcision is “ in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Ch. 2. 29.

How unwelcome must this truth have been to that self righteous people, which trusted in the privilege of being Abraham’s children according to the flesh ! How forcibly does St. Paul, in his reasoning, remind them that all Abraham’s seed were not children of the promise ! How tenderly does he forbear to mention this conclusion, that many of themselves were aliens ! How affectionately does he express his own concern in their behalf ! How earnestly, how honestly does he wish that he might himself be lost, if they might thereby be saved ! Here we have a most memorable example of self denial and self devotion. Here we have a most effectual warning against a sin which besets many forward professors of the faith, a selfish regard for their own salvation. At all cost to others, they seem to argue, I must escape the wrath to come. Nay, it should be only at all cost to thyself. Spare thyself in nothing ; but seek not to gain any thing for thyself, by that which is thy brother’s loss. Nay, spare not thine own self, if it be for thy brother’s gain. Nothing is more safe, than that which thou art willing to risk for him. None are more sure to be blessed of the Lord, than they who out of purest love for Him, would from their inmost hearts be content, as the apostle was, to be accursed from Christ for their brethren.

The rejection of the Jews further accounted for.

10 And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac;

11 (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

12 It was said unto her, The ¹ || elder shall serve the * younger.

13 As it is written, ² Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, ³ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor

¹ Gen. 25. 23.

² Exod. 9. 16.

|| Or, *greater*.

† Or, *answerest again, or, disputest with God?*

* Or, *lesser*.

³ Mal. 1. 2.

⁴ Is. 45. 9.

⁵ Exod. 33. 19.

⁶ Jer. 18. 6. Wis. 15. 7.

§ 464. *That we must not answer against God.*

We have here a further argument, by which St. Paul would satisfy his brethren the Jews, that though a large part of their people should become outcasts from the covenant, yet the word of God was not without effect. See ver. 6. For not only were some of Abraham's children manifestly excluded from the promise given generally to his seed, see ver. 7, but in the case of twins also, "conceived by one," and whilst the children were yet unborn, so that no account can be given for the distinction put between them except the free gift of God, it was said unto Rebecca, "The elder shall serve the younger." That is to say, the younger represents "the children of the promise." The younger "is counted for the seed." Ver. 8. The younger shall be the father, according to the flesh, of that great Saviour and Lord of all, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. And accordingly it is written in the prophet Malachi, 1. 2, 3, "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Whercin hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." The prophet argues the love of God for the children of Jacob, from the preference which He had given them in the promised land, over the desert country of the children of Esau. For that love, as opposed to hatred, means no more than preference; may be seen in the exhortation of our Lord, that in coming to Him we should "hate" in the comparison all whom we ought in reality most to love on earth.

If however under God's general promises to a whole family, He selects for their fulfilment, as the Jews could not help owning that He had, one single branch; if likewise in that single branch a large portion might still be excluded; if the seed be blessed, as assuredly it is, provided one out of twelve children, or one out of two, or one out of twins, or some thousands out of many people, enjoy the privileges proposed, and attain to the promised heaven; if this be so, yet how, it might be asked, how can the selection be accounted for, how can it be reconciled with the righteousness of God? To this question the apostle answers, that God reserves the right of choosing, in such cases, to Himself. And to the Jews in particular he replies, that God had in their Scriptures plainly taught them that this right was his, and his alone. For so He had declared to Moses of Himself, when at the request of this great prophet He proclaimed his name, and made all his goodness pass before him. See Exod. 33. 19. And so it had been the case in the choice of Jacob, which was determined not by the very earnest will of Isaac, nor by Esau's running for the venison, but by God that shewed mercy. And so in the case of Pharaoh it had been shown that God not only selects whom He will for the manifestation of his distinguishing mercy, but also raises up into pitiable eminence those, whom He chooses to make signal instances of his wrath against unbelief and sin.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" If the perversity of our hearts we shall be apt so to construe this doctrine of God's merciful election "not of works, but of him that calleth," as if by way of excuse for our transgressions we might plead an irresistible decree of God. But this would be to reply "against God." This would be that very "answering again," which in the servant is forbidden towards his master on the earth, see, Tit. 2. 9, much more to our Master which is in heaven. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Shall the vessel question the potter's right to make of the same lump one unto honour, and another unto dishonour? Or is the potter answerable for all the evil uses to which the vessels, whether honourable or dishonourable, may be put? Far from it. Let us rather be contented that God hath made us fit for any use at all. Let us be thankful that, having been made as Gentiles to dishonour, we have been called, in default of his first chosen people, to an honourable place in his regard. Let us be watchful, that now when we have become vessels of honour, we make not ourselves only the more fitted for destruction.

The reason of God's forbearance and of his mercy.

22 What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath || fitted to destruction :

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ?

25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people ; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 ² And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people ; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, ³ Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved :

28 For he will finish * the work, and cut it short in righteousness : because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

29 And as Esaias said before, ' Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

30 What shall we say then ? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore ? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone ;

33 As it is written, ' Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence : and whosoever believeth on him shall not † be ashamed.

|| Or, made up. ¹ Hos. 2. 23. 1 Pet. 2. 10. ² Hos. 1. 10. ³ Is. 10. 22, 23. * Or, the account.
⁴ Is. 1. 9. ⁵ Is. 8. 14. & 28. 16. 1 Pet. 2. 6. † Or, confounded.

§ 465. *It is by faith that we must follow after righteousness.*

The figure of the potter, and of his power over the clay, is here further carried on. And we have a plain declaration of the objects, for which God put a distinction between the children of the promise, and the rest ; for which He shews mercy on some, whilst others are hardened in their sins ; for which whilst some of the Jews believed, others were rejected, and the Gentiles called. All these things were done for the manifestation of God's wrath and power on the one hand, his wrath against sin, his power to punish it ; and on the other hand for the purpose of making known "the riches of his glory," the abundance of his goodness, greatness, and love, "on the vessels of mercy," on those whom He has made unto honour, "which he had afore prepared unto glory." And who these are St. Paul next declares, "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." So that all whom God has called so as that they hear the call, all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who believe, these are they whom out of all others God has chosen, for the manifestation of the riches of his glory. Oh how great is God's goodness that He thus has called us ! Oh how earnest should be our endeavours and our prayers that we through grace may obey this call !

Hosea and Isaiah had forewarned the Jews, that others would become beloved in their stead, that others and not God's people should be "called the children of the living God," that out of the countless multitude of the children of Israel a remnant only should be saved, and that in the summary execution of God's judgments the whole people, were it not for the remnant left, would be extinct even as Sodom and Gomorrha. These cities from which only Lot and his daughters escaped, these aptly represent to us the perilous condition of God's own highly favoured people. These shew us how few of those whom He loves the best, requite his favour with affection ; how great is the amount of pride, perversity, and sin, which He has to bear with in those whom He has most graciously entreated ; how fit for destruction those vessels may become which seem to have been made for honour.

"What shall we say then ?" Thus St. Paul at length introduces the painful statement which he was compelled to make ; "That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." And thus he accounts for their failure, "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." This was the stumbling stone at which they stumbled. This is the rock of offence over which still they fall ; and which still is the cause of downfall and destruction to many who are professors of the faith. To follow after the law of righteousness as the Jews did, is the way to fail as they. To conceive that we can be saved by virtue of our works, to put our trust in what we do, to suppose that we are chosen either for our work's sake, or for our faith's sake, or for any thing save only for the sake of Christ, to suppose that we are chosen to God's exclusive favour, to suppose that we are so chosen that we cannot fall, this is the way the Jews followed after the law of righteousness ; this is the way they fell. Let us then follow after it by faith. Let us look to God's promise, and believe. Let us contemplate the riches of his glory, and be persuaded that all unworthy as we are, He is pleased to confer them on us for his Son's sake. Let us believe on his Son, that He died for our sins, that by his death we live, that by his Spirit we walk in newness of life. Lord, grant that we may thus believe on Thee ! Grant that thus believing we may not be ashamed ! Give us a holy confidence, an humble trust, both that Thou hast died for our salvation, and that we shall henceforth live to thy honour and glory !

The righteousness of the Law and of the Gospel compared.

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, 'That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is,

to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? 'The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, 'Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

¹ Lev. 18. 5. Ezek. 20. 11. Gal. 3. 12.

² Deut. 30. 12.

³ Deut. 30. 14.

⁴ Is. 28. 16.

⁵ Joel 2. 32. Acts 2. 21.

§ 466. *Salvation, through Christ, by faith, proclaimed to all.*

That "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek," in respect to the ground and means of salvation, that only through Christ they can be saved, and that by believing in Christ both could be saved alike, this had been already hinted, ch. 3. 22, and is here fully and explicitly revealed. And here because the doctrine to be insisted on was particularly offensive to the Jews, St. Paul again declares his earnest affection for his brethren, telling them that his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Let this teach us in what method we might best express our affection for each other. Let this determine us, if there be any whom we love on earth, to pray, frequently, and earnestly, to desire whilst we pray, to desire from our inmost hearts, that they may be saved. Lord, grant to them which are most near and dear to us that they may escape the wrath to come! Lord, make us feel how near and dear to us, are all, even the most estranged of our fellow creatures! Lord, give to all in thy good time the knowledge of the truth and grace unto salvation!

The apostle further testifies his affection for his kinsmen by making all allowances for their grievous unbelief. "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." He then describes for their information and for the lasting instruction of the Christian church, the error into which the Jews had fallen. Let not us then be ignorant of God's righteousness. Let not us go about to establish our own righteousness. Let not us refuse to submit ourselves unto the righteousness of God. What this is, we are here most plainly told. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And in like manner the same apostle has written to the Corinthians, of our Lord, that He is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. 1. 30. So that "the righteousness of God" is the righteousness which Christ is "made unto us," even his living and dying in our behalf, his perfect obedience unto the Law, both in his life and in his death.

And how is it that we are to profit by this righteousness of God? By submitting ourselves unto it. By humbly receiving all that God has been pleased to give us, by heartily believing all that Christ has vouchsafed to do for us. This is the distinction here insisted on between the law as revealed by Moses, and "the righteousness which is of faith." The former promised life to "the man which doeth those things;" a course beyond the compass of human strength. The latter brings home salvation close within our reach. We need not to ask, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" or, "Who shall descend into the deep?" The word is nigh to us, even in the mouth and in the heart of every one that believeth. If we confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus, if we believe in our hearts "that God hath raised him from the dead," we shall be saved. For it is not possible to believe really in the heart without peace and joy in believing, without righteousness resulting as the fruit of faith, without thankfulness, and love, and obedience. "And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The outward profession of the faith, maintained in the presence of the gainsayers, upheld against the fear of suffering or of death, and consisting not only in an edifying conversation, but also in a holy life, this is evidence that we are not ashamed of Christ or of his words; this is surety that He will not be ashamed of us when He cometh in the presence of his Father and of the holy angels. See Mark 8. 38. What glad tidings of great joy are these! What good news that should be communicated to all people! We need but to believe, and to believe heartily. We need but to call upon the name of the Lord, and to call with devout and earnest prayer. And behold, there is no difference, whether Jew or Greek, whether heathen or mahometan, or Christian, "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Oh, let us not then go about to establish our own righteousness! Oh, let us submit ourselves, in all humility of heart, unto this "righteousness of God."

That both Jews and Gentiles have been by God amply called.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!'

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, 'Lord, who hath believed †our || report?'

17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, 'their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.'

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, 'I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people, *and* by a foolish nation I will anger you.'

20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, 'I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.'

21 But to Israel he saith, 'All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.'

¹ Is. 52. 7. Nah. 1. 15.

² Is. 53. 1. John 12. 38.

† Gr. *the hearing of us.*

|| Or, *preaching.*

³ Ps. 19. 4.

⁴ Deut. 32. 21.

⁵ Is. 65. 1.

⁶ Is. 65. 2.

§ 467. *How neglectful we have been in our calling of each other.*

The glad tidings of the Gospel, that free gift of God in Christ Jesus unto all mankind without distinction, are expressed in these few affecting words, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Ver. 13. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" The kind of calling, the kind of devout utterance, the prayer and thankfulness here intended, require in the worshipper that he must first believe. And for this he must first hear, must be informed and exhorted by a preacher. And the preacher must be sent. The preacher must be sent by those who were sent by Christ, must bear the commission of Him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. And preachers thus commissioned must be sent forth by those who know the Gospel, to those who know it not; must fulfil by their numbers, diligence, and faithfulness, by the excellence of the doctrines they preach, by the fulness of the pardon which they proclaim, must fulfil the description of the prophet: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

In this way would God have all to be called. In this way would God have all to be saved. All we who know of his boundless love, are instructed, as one of our first of duties, to make that love known unto our brethren. We are bound to urge it on the attention of those with whom we live, in proportion as we have reason to apprehend that they give it not the heed which it requires. We are bound to help according to our ability, in the best of all measures that are devised for telling it out amongst strangers at a distance, and amongst the heathen in foreign lands, that Christ died to save sinners. We are bound to help in maintaining preachers of the Gospel, to be sent forth in such numbers as that all may hear, and so fitted for their holy work, that all who hear may both earnestly believe, and effectually call upon the name of the Lord. This is the provision which has been made by God for propagating throughout the world the glad tidings of the Gospel, a succession of ministers ordained to preach, a written record of what they are to teach, a commandment frequently and affectionately urged on all who hear their words, to make them to be heard still by more.

This is the way in which God calls all mankind. Though in sorrow and shame we must confess that "they have not all obeyed the gospel." And so Esaias had foretold, when he asked of the many kindreds of the earth to whom these glad tidings were directed, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" From lack of faith there has been lack of obedience. We who have first heard, have not believed so heartily as to take the pains to tell the truth to others. Hence they have not heard. Hence they have not believed. Hence they have continued strangers to the word of God. "But I say, Have they not heard?" Have the nations of the earth been altogether kept in ignorance of saving truth? Far from it. It has been spread abroad very generally through most of them, though not generally and thoroughly adopted in any. That which was said by the Psalmist of the stars in the firmament is true also of the preachers of the Gospel. There is no quarter of the earth, there is no end of the world, which their words have not reached, where their sound has not been heard. Had but their report been uniformly believed, had but they who heard obeyed, had but these been believed in their turn, long ere this must the whole world have both known the truth, and loved it, and kept it, and obeyed it. Would that we who live at the very centre of the light, may labour by prayer and faith and diligence, to maintain in purity its brightness at home, and to kindle ever in fresh vigour its warmth and radiance abroad!

"But I say, Did not Israel know?" Can the Jews complain, that whilst other nations have been enlightened, they have not had help and guidance towards the truth? Far from it. They have had both prophets and apostles. They have had both warnings and promises. They have had besides their own, the calling of the Gentiles, to provoke them to a holy emulation. Let us therefore take warning from their wilful deafness. Let us watch, that God never stretch forth his hands all day long to us in vain. And least of all let us ever plead that we knew no better, when God has given us for our lot the highest eminence of knowledge, the most pure profession of faith, the sanction of the civil power for the support of our church, and the most primitive and apostolical constitution for its own abiding strength.

That God has not cast away his people.

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 ¹ Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? ² I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

¹ 1 Kings 19. 14.

² 1 Kings 19. 18.

³ Is. 6. 9.

|| Or, *hardened*.

⁴ Ps. 69. 22.

⁵ Is. 29. 10.

⁶ Or, *remorse*.

⁷ Ps. 69. 23

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were || blinded.

8 (According as it is written, ⁸ God hath given them the spirit of * slumber, ⁹ eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

9 And David saith, ¹⁰ Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

10 ¹¹ Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.

§ 468. *The folly of making our own terms with God.*

If we expect too much, we are sure to be disappointed; and in our pride of heart we are then apt to complain, and to think that we have nothing, because we have not every thing. Thus the Jews were inclined to reason, If we are not to be saved by virtue of being Jews; if the Gentiles can be saved even as we, if they "which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness," whilst "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness;" ch. 9. 30, 31; then God has cast away his people. But this follows not. God does not save them in the way they chose for themselves; but He saves them notwithstanding. "For I also am an Israelite," replies St. Paul, meaning, and yet I am a Christian, yet I am in a state of salvation, yet I trust to be saved through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. And not I only, he goes on to argue, but many others who like me believe, hundreds and thousands of Jews, who in all parts of the world embrace the glad tidings of the Gospel, and thus constitute the very people whom God foreknew. "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." All things, however future unto us, are always present unto Him with whom we have to do. And the many children of Israel according to the flesh, who shall be saved through Christ, by faith, fully justify all the promises and prophecies of God, against the cavils of their unbelieving brethren.

"Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias?" Here was a like case of human ignorance, as contrasted with the knowledge of Him who knoweth all. This prophet, like other prophets, was in error as a man. And because he knew of no other worshipper of Jehovah, he concluded that he alone was left. But neither here had God cast away his people which He foreknew. He had seven thousand reserved to Himself who had never "bowed the knee to the image of Baal." He had seven thousand, whom He knew of, though the prophet knew not, whom before the prophet knew of them, nay before the prophet or they themselves were born, God foreknew.

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." There are many whom God has not cast off, many Jews who are still his people; though not as the rest expect, by merit of their own, but by the free gift of Him who has reserved them to Himself. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." So that the Jews must not count themselves cast off by God, because He would not save them as they desired, by their own deservings. For this would have been no free gift from God. And the grace which has come by Jesus Christ, see John 1. 17, would be then not worthy of the name; even as work also is not work, in the sense intended by the Jews, under the dispensation of grace. And as for the discomfiture of these vain expectations, and the casting away of many, though not of all, the Jews; this was fully consistent with the promises of God. For it was no more than He foreknew, when He promised; it was no more than by his prophets He had foretold.

What folly then was this, for Israel to persist in seeking that which God never meant to give, exclusive salvation for themselves, and that by their own deservings! And how like unto their foolishness is ours, if we devise for ourselves a righteousness of our own, and if, when in this we fail, as fail we must, if we suppose, in the despair of mortified conceit, that therefore we are cast off by God! No, rather the more we fall short in doings of our own, let us the more turn our attention to what God has wrought for us; let us the more be inclined to come unto Him with faith, believing in his promises, convinced that they belong unto ourselves, glad to think that they are extended to our neighbours, and happy to find that through his help, and out of love to Him who so greatly loved us, we can do what before we found impossible.

The fall of the Jews made profitable to the Gentiles.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the || diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are in flesh*, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of *them be*, but life from the dead?

16 For if the first fruit *be* holy, the lump *is also holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and *hon*, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in *among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

|| Or, decay, or, loss.

18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21 For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23 And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

* Or, for them.

§ 469. *That we should be not high minded, but fear.*

Though God has not cast away his people, though the apostle expresses horror at the thought, he admits that many of them had cast away themselves. And hence he supposes that an objector might next ask, "Have they stumbled that they should fall?" Is their fall helpless, hopeless? Has their stumbling been devised, as the words of David might seem to imply; on purpose for them to be cut off for ever? To this objection he again replies, "God forbid." Rather, he argues, their fall is made the occasion of the Gospel being preached abroad more widely to the Gentiles. And thence the Jews also, being provoked to jealousy, stirred up to a holy rivalry, might probably themselves become believers. And this was a consideration which urged St. Paul to more than common zeal amongst the Gentiles, the hope that he might provoke to this profitable emulation them that were his own flesh, and might be an instrument in God's hands for saving some of them. Oh how ought we in all our rivalry with each other, and in all our own success with which God is pleased to bless us, how ought we to aim at this single object, to provoke one another to Christian excellence! And how, if we were to partake of the apostle's spirit, how should we strive to turn to account our own prosperity as Gentile Christians, to the conversion of the unbelieving Jews!

Such an event is here regarded by St. Paul as no less than "life from the dead." And probably he means that it will accompany a great revival of true piety, answerable to the pure faith, devotion, and obedience, of the first converts who were Jews, and of him who was the father of the faithful. And such an event is shewn not to be impossible; considering that it was by reason of unbelief that the branches were broken off, and that if they abide not in unbelief God is able, as well as willing, to graft them in again. Nay further, it is highly probable. For if we who were but aliens, of a stock like to a wild olive tree, were yet grafted in through God's abundant kindness, "how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" How much more shall the seed of Abraham according to the flesh become his children according to the Spirit, become followers of his faith, and partakers of that inheritance which is no less theirs than ours!

Never then let us boast against these unhappy branches. Never let us forget how many families of the Jews became believers at the first, and are now counted amongst the families of the Christians. Never let us think more highly of ourselves than as children of perverse idolaters, most graciously received into the comprehensive love of the God whom our fathers most grievously dishonoured. Never let us suppose that we do any honour to our Lord, by treating with cruelty, neglect, or scorn, the broken branches of his beloved vine. Never let us conceive that we can more faithfully do his will, than in helping by our kindness and our zeal, by our alms and by our prayers, to prepare these estranged children of the promise, for God to graft them in. And for ourselves, as we survey these wondrous dealings of Him, who out of evil bringeth good, let us be not high minded, but fear. Let us observe both the goodness and the severity of God. Let us note how his goodness towards ourselves is guarded from abuse by the salutary caution, "if thou continue in his goodness." Let us tremble to think of the fearful alternative "otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

The blindness of the Jews is only for a time.

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that *||* blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, 'There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28 As concerning the Gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sake.

29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

30 For as ye in times past have not * believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

31 Even so have these also now not † believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God hath ‡ concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 * For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

|| Or, *hardness.*

1 Is. 59. 20.

* Or, *obeyed.*

† Or, *obeyed.*

‡ Or, *shut them all up together.*

2 Is. 49. 13. Wisd. 9. 13. 1 Cor. 2. 16.

§ 470. *That we may not judge God's ways by ours.*

We have already learnt the possibility, nay probability, that the unbelieving portion of the Jews, will regain their place in the church of God. We have it here further revealed that this event will certainly take place. The blindness which has happened to this part of Israel, will cease when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, when there are no longer any great numbers left who would believe. And then "all Israel shall be saved." The prophecies which relate to their distinction, as the elect people of God, shall be fulfilled in the signal conversion of those many Jews, dispersed throughout the world, who have hitherto rejected the Messiah. Then shall the Deliverer "turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Then shall they no longer cleave to righteousness of their own, but learn to put their faith in Him, who according to his covenant will take away their sins.

And this mystery St. Paul reveals to us, on purpose to humble our hearts, lest we should be wise in our own conceits; lest we should imagine like the Jews, that it is for any worth or work of ours that God has chosen us in Christ unto redemption. No, as it is for the fathers' sake that this remnant of the Jews is beloved, and that, not because their fathers deserved this at God's hand, but because He shewed mercy unto them; so it is not because we deserved it, but because God freely chose to give it us; because in the enmity of the Jews He determined to make manifest his goodness to the Gentiles, therefore it is that we have now obtained mercy through their unbelief. Thus for our sakes, or at least for our gain, have they been enemies. And thus from their rejection we ought to learn how little we can trust in any deservings of our own, or in any supposed exclusive favour of the Lord. Nay, it was for their sakes rather, and not ours, it was for their gain rather than for ours, it was that they through our mercy may obtain mercy, that we in their default having been admitted to the covenant, may so much the more stir up them to receive it gladly; this we see is the object, this is the end which God in all these dealings is bringing round. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Oh how greatly must He glory in forgiveness, if He permits even the worst of evils, sin, with a view to the exercise of mercy; if He suffers his chosen people, a great part of them, to be blind to the light He sheds abroad, to be deaf to the glad tidings He declares, to abide for ages an example to mankind of obstinate rebellion against Himself; intending all the while so much more largely and freely, undeservedly and unexpectedly, to forgive their wickedness, and take away their sins!

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" What folly then in man to try to fathom all, to try to make all that God reveals agree with what we suppose to be right reason and the truth! As if we could know the whole design of God! As if we had been taken into his counsels! As if our views of justice were the standard by which his righteous dealings might be tried! As if we had done or could do any thing for Him, which makes Him owe us the recompense of reward! Nay, it is to Him we owe the faculties with which we aim to judge. It is to Him we owe the will with which we choose to serve the Lord. The hands we work with, the eyes we see with, the minds with which we know, the hearts with which we love, these are of his making, these are his free gift. And these, when we had made them perverse and at enmity with Him, these He has restored by his free gifts of grace, to the power of fulfilling all his will. Thus "of him, and through him" "are all things." Oh that all things might in us be "to him" also! Oh that all we have, and all we are, all our powers and abilities, all our zeal and affection, might be devoted unto Him, to whom we owe them all; "to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

God's mercy must move us to serve Him.

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think † soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

† Gr. *to sobriety.*

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office :

5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith ;

7 Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering* : or he that teacheth, on teaching ;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that † giveth, *let him do it* * with simplicity ; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth merey, with cheerfulness.

‡ Or, *imparteth.*

* Or, *liberally.*

§ 471. *That we must think soberly of ourselves.*

"I beseech you therefore brethren." Because of God's so great love for both Jews and Gentiles, because there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," ch. 8. 1, because the Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," ch. 1. 16, therefore must believers offer unto God the reasonable service of a holy life. And this consequence St. Paul is not content to urge in argument, by way of answer to the objections, which were likely to be made to his doctrine of God's mercy in Christ. He devotes this whole conclusion of his Epistle, to pressing upon the consciences of believers, their several Christian duties, one by one ; by way of shewing us both how we ought to walk, and that it is on a right faith that we ought to build this holy practice. The more then we are persuaded that God has loved us, let us the more shew forth our love for Him. The more we feel the delight of being delivered from the observances of the Law, let us the more freely offer unto God the sacrifice, not of bulls and goats, but of our own bodies, whilst yet we live, to be holy, acceptable unto Him ; and of our own minds, to be not fashioned after the ways of the world we live in, but to be renewed after the image of Him who has created us anew in Christ Jesus. This is the consequence here urged by the apostle, that we should give up our whole selves to God. And this is the ground on which he urges us ; "by the mercies of God." By the abundant free gift of the Father, by the precious death of the Son, by the gracious coming of the Holy Ghost, by the forgiveness of sins, by the resurrection unto life eternal ; "I beseech you therefore brethren."

And which particular duty does St. Paul here first point out ? To which would he have us give most early diligence ? Humility. Not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, to think humbly of ourselves as compared with one another, and yet more to humble ourselves in the sight of God ; this is a thing to be attended to at the beginning of our course, and to be kept stedfastly in view unto the end of it. Let us think therefore of ourselves soberly, according as God has dealt to each of us the measure of faith. No more. Not according to our natural abilities ; these are trifles. Not according to our earthly possessions ; these must vanish away. But according to our faith and grace, according to the measure of our holiness and love ; these are inestimable gifts ; these are beyond the highest value we can put upon them. And yet assuredly the more we have of these we shall the more think soberly of ourselves. For we shall the more deeply feel, that they are dealt unto us by God ; and that we have nothing which we have not received. See 1 Cor. 4. 7.

This instruction for sobriety of mind, is set forth by St. Paul at the outset, with especial reference to the many marvellous gifts, which at that time abounded in the church, and to the different offices of trust and authority, which the church must at all times have to share amongst its members. These would be sure to offer great temptation to the pride and passions of sinful men. And therefore they who had the gift of prophesying, or interpreting the will of God to man, are here warned not to neglect "the proportion of faith," not to fall short of the measure of their gift, which is according to the measure of their faith. And likewise ministers in their ministering, and "he that teacheth," the instructors of the young, who are so tenderly committed by our Lord to the watchful care of his disciples, see Matt. 18. 10, 14, and "he that exhorteth," whether to young or old we fulfil the duty enjoined on all, of exhorting one another, see Heb. 3. 13, and "he that giveth," and "he that ruleth," and "he that sheweth merey ;" all these in their several offices will be enabled to act with cheerfulness, diligence, and simplicity, with a single eye to God's glory, and with a kind concern for each other ; if only according to the rule here given, and on the motives here set forth, they attain to think soberly of themselves. Let us then each learn to look upon ourselves, as single and subordinate members of one body in Christ. Let us each feel that we are members one of another. Let us be aware that no one of us can be so profitable to the rest, as the rest are ever necessary to us. Let us bear in mind that we owe more to each other, than the others can owe to us. Let us above all remember that we owe all to God.

Love unfeigned.

9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another || with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

11 *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*

12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*

13 *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*

14 *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

15 *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

16 *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind*

|| *Or, in the love of the brethren.*

† *Or, be contented with mean things.*

¹ Deut. 32. 35.

² Prov. 25. 21.

not high things, but † condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

18 *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, ¹ Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

20 ² *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

§ 472. *Evil overcome with good.*

Love is what God is. See 1 John 4. 8. Love is what is revealed of God in the Gospel. Love is what in the Gospel is enjoined on man. Do we believe that God has so loved us, as to forgive our sins, to give his Son to die for us, and for his sake to count us righteous? Let then our love be without pretence. Let it be unaffected. Let it be real. Let us not be content with merely not doing evil; let us abhor it. Let us not be satisfied with merely doing good; let us cleave to it. Let us cling to doing it. Let us rather do it than not. Let us rather cut off our right hand, pluck out our right eye, than not devote hands, and eyes, and every member that we have, to proving or making manifest in our lives, "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Ver. 2.

This love we must prove by the respect and attention which we pay to each other's wishes, at the sacrifice of our own. And in this our work of love, we must not be slothful. But whatsoever we have to do, doing it out of regard to the welfare of each other, we must do it with the ardour, zeal, and vigour, of them who are aware that they are serving Christ. What an awakening view is this of all our earthly duties! What an encouragement to perseverance! What a support in weariness! We are working the will of Him that redeemed us. We are forwarding the welfare of each other. We are doing so; if only we work in love, if only we walk by faith. We have but thus to reckon within ourselves, we have but thus to feel, to purpose, to pray that we may thus believe and love; and behold we are now counted to be "serving the Lord."

And how greatly should we now rejoice in hope, when we are convinced that we are working for a Master which is in heaven! How patient should we be in tribulation, how instant in prayer, when we are persuaded that our Master is our Saviour also, that He laid down his life to save our souls, and that He now lives to make intercession in our behalf! Our worldly goods, how little should we value them, except as they may enable us to entertain the poor, the stranger, and the fatherless; and especially to relieve the wants of those who are of the same household of faith! Our trouble, and the persecutions or wrongs we meet with, or any curses that may be heaped upon our heads, how surely would these lead us to ask a blessing from the Lord, for those who herein know not what they do; that they too may learn, ere it be too late, to "bless, and curse not!" How light would our own afflictions thus become! How deeply should we feel for the sorrows of our brethren! How really and thoroughly should we "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep!" With sympathy in the feelings of each other, with anxiety to agree in the convictions of our minds, how ready should we be to condescend to the very lowliest of our brethren, how far from trying to exalt ourselves, how far from being wise in our own conceits!

But the triumph of true Christian temper is further to be insisted on, in respect of our behaviour towards our enemies. First we must "recompense no man evil for evil." But is this all our duty? By no means. We must think beforehand, and watch, and take pains to do nothing that shall give an enemy provocation, nothing that shall tempt our brother to be our enemy. Thus, as far as in us lies, as far as our conduct and our feelings go, we must live at peace with all, even with them that are bent on contention and strife. But it may not be always possible to prevent their violence. It may happen that whilst we are labouring for peace, they molest, insult, or injure us. Then comes in the next rule for our direction, "give place unto wrath." We must contend by yielding. We must oppose by giving way. And lastly, if we would be sure of victory, we must do more, we must return good for evil; we must "overcome evil with good." Food given to our enemy in his hunger, drink in his thirst, help in his necessity, and compassion in his distress; are not these the coals of kindly fire, which will best melt his reluctant heart? For is it not by means like these, even by forgiveness of our sins, and by counting us, though sinners, righteous, even by Christ dying for them that nailed Him to the cross, is it not by this undeserved mercy, heaped freely on our unwilling heads, that God seeks to recover our affection to Himself?

The duty of subjects to the higher powers.

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are || ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But

if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

|| Or, *ordered*.

§ 473. *That we must be subject for conscience sake.*

How great are the advantages of civil government! How many and grievous are the ills from which we are defended by "the powers that be;" by kings and other magistrates, who under their authority, are a terror to evil works! Let us but imagine for a moment, all law suspended. Let us but conceive all authority suppressed. Let us suppose the evil passions of the violent and profane, of the covetous, revengeful, and impure, let loose upon the peaceable and industrious, on the weak, the unprotected, the modest, the refined. What horrors unspeakable must ensue! What destruction of property, what waste of life! What losses to the rich, what aggravation of poverty to the poor! What violating of all we hold most dear on earth! What offensive blasphemy against the majesty of Him, with whom we hope to dwell for ever in heaven! From all this, civil government is the means of saving us. And therefore for this reason, though there were no other, we should be glad to "be subject unto the higher powers." But it is for conscience sake that the Christian must be subject; it must be out of love for man, and out of love for God. Subjection to the government established in the land, is a part of that service which we must delight to render to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And it is on this footing, not that of mere advantage to ourselves, that the apostle rests this important duty. "The powers that be are ordained of God." And this he declares in this Epistle to the Romans, who then laboured under the oppression of one of the worst of governors. For in all ordinances of God, it is the ordinance that we ought to look to, and not the man; not the personal character of that frail human creature, to whom an office is entrusted, but the fact that it is entrusted to him, and the evidence that it is entrusted to him by One, in whom alone is no frailty, and who alone does all things well. And here we learn from Scripture that this is the case with established governments; with those rulers, whatsoever name or title they may bear, whom we find in possession of lawful authority. Being assured therefore that so it is, let us take pains in discharging the duties which St. Paul enjoins, as following on this divine ordinance.

These duties are, subjection to the authority of rulers, and contribution to the expenses of their government. Subjection to their authority usually presents no difficulty to a Christian. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Though the laws which they administer in a mixt society, can seldom be free from taint of worldly wisdom, they enjoin what in the main is good, they restrain what in the main is evil. And though the Christian might wish many things in the state to be more in harmony with the Gospel than they are, he will seldom, at least in this our country, find any thing imposed upon himself, which the Gospel would denounce as sin. And therefore he is an obedient subject, and not only so, but an attached friend, to the established government. For its many excellent uses, and yet more for its high origin from heaven, he respects it, loves it, and honestly obeys it. For its faults, if faults he cannot help discerning, he grieves at heart, he intercedes in secret prayer, and he interposes whatever influence he lawfully can for good, consistently with quietness and peace. But the issue he is content to leave with God; knowing that he is himself but a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, happy to do what good he can, and to enjoy what blessings he may, in the land of his pilgrimage, but intent, with most deep anxiety, to reach unto that heavenly city, "whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11. 10.

"For this cause pay ye tribute also." This is the second duty we owe to our governors. And this we owe, because they are God's ministers, appointed by his ordinance to wait on these very things, the execution of the laws, and the preservation of the public peace. Hence the rest are bound to supply their wants, to maintain them in abundance, and to provide them with such help and means, as are needful for carrying on the work they have in hand. Never therefore let us meanly avoid bearing our full share of public expenses. Never let us evade the payment of what we owe, whether it be tribute or honour, whether money or personal service, to the use of the state. Never let us pay grudgingly or of necessity. Ever let us pay cheerfully, as unto the Lord.

Love is the fulfilling of the law.

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high

time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 Let us walk || honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

|| Or, decently.

§ 474. *That it is high time to prepare for judgment.*

The apostle had been speaking of paying tribute, and enjoining that we should render to all their dues, on the ground of our owing all to God our Saviour. Hence he takes occasion to add this general direction: "Owe no man any thing." Never wilfully be in debt to any one. Never contract a debt which you are likely to have difficulty in paying. Never take that which you cannot pay for. Never use that which you have not paid for, except by the full consent of him to whom you owe; except with ample security to yourselves that you could pay, and as soon as may be required. Never covet that which you cannot afford to buy. Never look at or look out for that, which you may not safely covet. This is our way to owe no man any thing. This is the way to be never in debt.

And yet there is one debt which we may be glad to owe. There is one demand which we never fully pay. And this is, that we love one another. "For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." And this is what we never do. This therefore is what we always owe. Always we are under covenant not to commit adultery, not to kill, not to steal, not to bear false witness, not to covet. Always we are bounden and obliged to work no ill to our neighbour, nay, to love our neighbour as ourselves. For this comprehends all the other commandments. This comprehends all those which have been mentioned. Should we wish to have our own goods coveted, our servants, our house, wife, or husband? Should we wish to have false witness preferred against ourselves? Should we wish that any should steal from us, any kill us, any inflict on us that most cruel of all wrongs which is inflicted in committing adultery? Should we wish, could we consistently with our allowable self love, could we bear to think of wishing for such harm unto ourselves? If not, let us take heed that we do no such harm, purpose no such harm, against our neighbours. For this is what we owe them, to love them as ourselves. And our love must be unfeigned, unpretended. It must be felt, and also we must act upon it. And the more we act on it, we shall still love them more. The more we pay, we shall still have more to owe.

"And that, knowing the time." Here is a new consideration introduced, one of weight, to add to the love of God and man, to the sense of God's love towards ourselves, though alone it would not be able to move our hearts unto affection, or our hands to activity and well doing. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Each day, each hour, the salvation of his soul is brought nearer to the faithful convert. Each hour, each moment of our lives, shortens the remaining period of our night on earth, and hastens on the day when we shall wake in eternity. Oh, who would then be clothed in the works of darkness? Who would not, before arising in that glorious light, wish to cast off the garment spotted by the flesh, and put on the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith? See Eph. 6. 14—17. We shall be here but a short time, at the longest. Whilst we read and listen, the time is running on. And at the end, if we be believers in God's mercy through Christ, we know that we shall dwell with Him in endless glory. And shall we not therefore walk already as they that are in the day? Shall we not at once put on as far as possible the Lord Jesus Christ? Shall we not at once both hide the shame of our sinfulness in the robe of his abundant propitiation, and also fashion the character of our lives after the pattern of his most excellent example? Far be it from us, his redeemed, to walk or to wish to walk in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying! Far be it from us to make "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Mercifully our Lord allows us still to minister to its necessities. He teaches us how to use its powers for his honour, even to make it a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. Earnestly let us pray for his assistance, that we may be able to make good, in all we may say and do, in all that we deny ourselves, and in all that we enjoy, this reasonable service which He requires.

God grant that we may glorify Him with our bodies! God grant that we may serve Him from our hearts! God grant that under the sense of his unbounded love, we may love Him from our inmost souls!

Rules for right behaviour in things indifferent.

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* || not to doubtful disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be * fully persuaded in his own mind.

6 He that † regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

|| Or, not to judge his doubtful thoughts.

* Or, fully assured.

† Or, observeth

1 2 Cor. 5. 10.

2 Is. 45. 23.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for ¹ we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11 For it is written, ² *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

§ 475. *That the weak must not judge the strong.*

"Doubtful disputations," fierce discussions on obscure points of doctrine, or the forcible imposition of indifferent matters of practice, these were among the evils which arose from the prejudices of the Jews, whether perversely maintained by them, or inconsiderately offended by the Gentiles. Would that in like trifles, often agitated with no less wrath and strife amongst ourselves, we would observe the inestimable rules which the apostle here lays down, for enlightening the consciences of the weak brethren, and for regulating the liberty of the strong! Would that we might hence learn to avoid doubtful disputations, neither by our needless scruples judging wrongfully the innocent, nor hurting the tender conscience of the scrupulous, by the wanton enjoyment of that liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free!

The points in dispute here referred to, were the lawfulness or unlawfulness of some particular kinds of food, and of esteeming some particular days one above another. First then it is to be observed that both were in reality matters of indifference. The Jewish converts probably still adhered to the distinctions in the Law between meats unclean and clean. And in order to be in any case safe, some it appears, ate herbs only. Again, it is not improbable that they persisted in observing their sabbath on the last day of the week, instead of that, or besides that, which was hallowed by the other Christians on the Lord's Day. Now there would be no harm in hallowing two sabbaths. There would be no harm in abstaining from all meats and eating herbs only. And the things would be thus in themselves matters of indifference. And as long as any one was persuaded in his mind that to do them was a duty to God, it was well to do them, it was right, nay necessary to do them, necessary in order to be able to do all "unto the Lord." And far, very far ought we to be from despising any one, who out of a sincere desire to do the will of God, denies himself ever so needlessly, abstains from food which we know, however clearly, to be allowable, or hallows a day or hour, of which we are sure, however positively, that it is open to our worldly work.

But it is chiefly the weak brother who is here first instructed that, however sacred his scruples ought to be in the esteem of the strong, he is by no means to allow himself to judge others by the same measure which he uses for himself. This is that not uncommon union of a weak understanding and a vain censorious heart, which, under the plea of zeal for God's honour, pronounces unjust sentence against man. And thus the scrupulous, who are so ready to take offence, "put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall," of the most dangerous kind in the way of their brethren; who seeing so little of charity in their scruples, become insensible to the beauty, excellence, and loveliness, of a really tender conscience. Let therefore the weak brother in any case beware how he judges "another man's servant." Let him remember of all his brother Christians, that it is to Christ that they must stand or fall. Let him consider how vain it is for him to censure those, whom God "hath received," whom God is able to make to stand. It is to the Lord we live, and not to each other, nay, not unto ourselves. It is to the Lord we die. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." He is our Lord. He is our Judge also. We must all stand before his judgment seat. How then dare we presume to judge each other? How dare they presume on this most manifest offence, who are scrupulous in matters of indifference? How dare they that are less scrupulous judge these? How dare any not be scrupulous, even in small matters, where they are not fully persuaded in their minds. And, of most strange and awful case of all, how dare any, with the Judge so nigh at hand, even dare to commit knowingly, without scruple, the most gross and grievous iniquities.

Further rules for our behaviour in things indifferent.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* * nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be † unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkeſt thou not ‡ charitably. ¹ Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died:

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which

make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. ² All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21 *It is* good neither to eat ³ flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22 Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

23 And he that || doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

* Gr. common.

† Gr. common.

‡ Gr. according to charity.

¹ 1 Cor. 8. 11.

² Tit. 1. 15.

³ 1 Cor. 8. 13.

|| Or, discerneth and putteth a difference between meats.

§ 476. *That the strong must not scandalize the weak.*

See how large is the liberty revealed to us by our Lord! "There is nothing unclean of itself." "All things indeed are pure." See how aptly this our liberty under the Gospel, compared with the restraints of the Law of Moses, signifies and represents to us, the ability of our Lord to cleanse from sin, the purpose of the Father to count sinners righteous for his sake! But note also how carefully the apostle guards us against abusing this our clearer knowledge, these our more large privileges! "But to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean." "But it is evil to that man who eateth with offence." "He that doubteth, is damned if he eat," is brought in guilty of sin. "Because he eateth not of faith," because he is not persuaded that he may eat lawfully. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin," whatsoever we do against the convictions of our conscience, whatsoever we do without its free consent, is offence against God. And if this be true even of things indifferent, what must be the ease with things plainly forbidden? What must be the sinfulness of murder, and adultery, of covetousness, uncharitableness, falsehood, and dishonesty, known as they all are to be denounced by God, if it be sin to partake of even allowable enjoyments, so long as we do not know them to be allowable? Oh let us be sure that we allow ourselves in nothing that our consciences condemn! Oh let us spend our chiefest strength, and pray with our most fervent prayers, against those many gross and grievous offences, which all agree to be offences, to which we all are liable, and by some of which we find ourselves most apt to fall.

Uncharitableness, for instance; what a tenfold sinful sin is this! When God has so greatly loved us, when Christ has so earnestly entreated us that we should love one another, then how grievously offensive must it be for us not to walk charitably! And yet how plainly is this offence, in its most offensive form, disregard to the soul of a fellow creature, how plainly is it here brought home to those, who do what they are persuaded is allowable, so as to scandalize those who hold it wrong! "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." A fellow creature, nay more, a fellow Christian, one whose hope is founded on the same Saviour's blood, such an one thou hazardest, such an one thou puttest in jeopardy of eternal death, whether by thy meat or by thy drink, whether by thy business or by thy amusement, if thou doest that which, however allowable in itself is evil spoken of in thy brother's ears. And think not to say within thine heart, It is my duty to use my liberty. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink;" thy privileges, thy rights, thy glorious promises relate not to these trifles, require not for their fulfilment that thou shouldst enjoy the whole extent of thine inheritance on earth. "Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" these are thy high calling, these are thy supreme enjoyments; these, involving most unquestionably charity towards man, these render thee a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom. Serve Christ in these things, and thou shalt be acceptable through Him to God, and need give no offence to man. "Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify other." Eat no flesh, and drink no wine, rather than make thy brother stumble. Rather than make the weak weaker; rather than render narrower to the infirm the narrow path "that leadeth unto life," Matt. 7. 14, suppress within thy breast thy clearer knowledge, put not into practice thy more enlightened convictions; have thy faith "to thyself before God."

Such is the caution requisite even in doing what is right, lest, being supposed wrong, it lead others to offend. Such is the value of our brother's soul; such the care, and forethought, and anxiety, with which we ought to watch for his salvation; that in some cases we must not exercise our faith, under the sanction of our conscience, for fear of encouraging him to do violence to his! How much more then should our apprehension lest we scandalize each other restrain us from all unquestionable sin! How much more must they have to answer for, who scandalize their brethren not by doing good, but by doing evil! How many sins of friends and relatives of those we most live with and best love, may be by this means now lying at our doors! How many souls may we have helped to mislead in error, to harden in iniquity, or to drown in endless perdition!

That we must receive one another, as Christ also received us.

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, ¹ The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

5 ² Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another || according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, ³ For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10 And again he saith, ⁴ Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11 And again, ⁵ Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

12 And again, *Esaias* saith, ⁶ There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

¹ Ps. 69. 9.

² 1 Cor. 1. 10.

⁵ Ps. 117. 1.

|| Or, *after the example of.*

³ Ps. 18. 49.

⁶ Is. 11. 10.

⁴ Deut. 32. 43.

§ 477. *How we ought to please our neighbour for his good.*

That the strong "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," and that every one ought to please not only himself but his neighbour for his good to edification; these are rules which might be well applied to all matters in controversy amongst Christians. Oh that we would apply them faithfully! Oh that we would be anxious to please our neighbour rather than ourselves! Oh that we were ever ready to give up our own way, our own opinion, our own customs, for the sake of harmony with those who differ from us! Oh that we would herein follow the example of our Lord, and by learning and practising what is written in the Scriptures, might attain to the assurance of hope! There is but one limit, here set down, to the duty of conciliating our brother. It must be "for his good to edification." We must suppress no truth of doctrine. We must withhold no precept of perfect practice. For thus it was that "Christ pleased not himself." He allowed in us no evil passion. He permitted no pride, no sensuality. But he bore the reproach of the wicked, and yielded up even his life upon the cross. If then by any concession of ours we would win them that differ from us, let us on the one hand be careful that we concede nothing which it is our duty to maintain; but on the other, let us be watchful that we retain nothing which it is our duty to yield. Let us beware lest, under the plea of contending for the truth, we are contending for our own way and will. Let us examine whether it be the real desire of our hearts to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus. Let us be glad to think it possible, let us help to make it probable, that we, together with those who most widely are at variance, "may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us without reserve of jealousy, without assumption of superiority, with free forgiveness, and with cordial love, receive one another, *even as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*"

There are hearts which delight in dissension. There are tempers which can only live in the element of strife. There are parties which are averse to communion with each other, as the Jews of old were towards the Gentiles. These study not to remove, but to strengthen the barriers which keep men from each other. These had almost rather not be comprehended within the pale of Christ's church themselves, than see it widened so as to embrace their opponents. Let such lay to heart the earnest appeal which St. Paul here makes to his reluctant countrymen, that they should receive with cheerfulness their Gentile brethren as fellow heirs of salvation through Christ. "I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." For this it was that our Lord was born of the family of David, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham. For this salvation was of the Jews. For this the Saviour of mankind submitted to be circumcised Himself. God's promise must needs be fulfilled. But was this the only reason? or was it not for this cause also, "that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy?" Yes, surely, ye seed of Israel; for so it is written in your own honoured prophets. Moses, see Deut. 32. 43, and David, see Ps. 18. 49, and 117. 1, and *Isaiah*, see ch. 11. 1, have all very plainly told you, that the Gentiles shall become believers in the Lord. And will ye Jews alone resist his will? Shall ye persist in grudging the free bounty of his love? or shall Christians in like temper grudge each other the enjoyment of Christian privileges, the covenant of grace, the hope of heaven? Far be from us this uncircumcised heart; this exclusive, uncharitable disposition! Far be from us the weakness that would please our brother to his harm, and the selfishness that would refuse to please him for his good! Far be from us all indifference to the truth, and all aversion to those who are in error! Far be from us all prejudice, partiality, and pride, all blindness to our own faults, all bitterness towards those who most widely differ from us, all false shame in speaking the truth, all unwillingness to speak it in love!

St. Paul writeth of his ministry and of his purposes.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the

power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyrieum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, 'To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.'

22 For which cause also I have been * much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled † with your company.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

|| Or, *sacrificing*.

1 Is. 52. 15.

* Or, *many ways, or, oftentimes*.

† Gr. *with you*, ver. 32.

§ 478. *How we ought to hope of ourselves, and give God the glory.*

To pray, and on due occasions to express our prayers unto each other, to tell each other how ardently we desire, and how earnestly we intercede at the throne of grace for each other's spiritual welfare, these are amongst the many profitable practices recommended by the example of St. Paul. Let not us then, through false shame refuse to say unto each other, in our Christian correspondence or edifying conversation, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Nor let us be slow to acknowledge in each other the work of God's grace in the heart; but readily be persuaded of our brethren that they are "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." To suppose, either of others, or of ourselves, that God's love proclaimed to sinners is felt in all its fulness, and returned after our ability with holiness and zeal, this by some may be thought to savour of presumption. But how much greater is their boldness if they can bear to think, that when God has called they have not hearkened, when God has given they have scorned his gift! To bear the thought of standing on the borders of eternity, with heaven and hell on either side at hand, and no provision made, no assurance of hope entertained, either for others or for themselves, that they shall "escape the wrath to come," 1 Thess. 1. 10, what presumption, what hardihood, what madness is this!

And yet never let us suppose but that we need to be often put in mind, often warned, whilst we think we stand, to take heed lest we fall. See 1 Cor. 10. 12. And let us not fail on due occasions, with humility and tenderness, and full proof of love, to warn and admonish one another. This was St. Paul's method with the Romans. To his prayer he added praise and encouragement. His praise he tempered with admonition. To his admonition he added mention of his own labours in the ministry. And the mention of his own labours and success he qualified, by ascribing all the glory unto Him that giveth the increase. It was not on the strength of his own advantages, but, "because of the grace" given to him of God, that he undertook to put them in mind. The offering up of the Gentiles through his ministry was acceptable, not by reason of his ministering, but because it was "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." If he had whereof to glory, it was "through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God." He would dare to speak of nothing as wrought by himself, but only of what Christ had wrought by him. He would ascribe nothing to his own ability, but all to "mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God." He would not "build upon another man's foundation," not preach the Gospel where Christ was known before; and this not in order to have the glory for his own, but in order to shew more plainly that it was God's doing, by fulfilling most exactly the promise of God's word; "To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand." And, in like manner, we doubt not that it was in God he trusted, to see the Romans in the journey which he proposed to take. For to God's providence, and the necessity of doing God's work, he attributed his having hitherto been hindered. And though he needed not to express always the very words, we may be assured that he felt continually aware that it was only "if the Lord will," James 4. 15, only if the Lord were willing that he should compass his desire of seeing those disciples, whom not having seen he longed to visit. May we thus ever feel, and thus frequently express, our entire dependance on our father which is in heaven, for all the good we do, or purpose! May we thus in all labours for each other, and especially in all our efforts for the prevalence of truth, ascribe all the glory to the Lord!

St. Paul requesteth the prayers of the brethren.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I

shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me;

31 That I may be delivered from them that || do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I *have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

33 Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

|| Or, *are disobedient.*

§ 479. *How we ought to pray for earthly blessings.*

St. Paul prays for his brethren at Rome; and he also beseeches them to pray for him. He prays for them that the God of peace may be with them all. He mentions the very particulars for which he wishes them to pray, that he might be delivered from them in Judæa which believed not, that his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted of the saints, and that by the will of God he might come unto them with joy, and might with them be refreshed. These things, therefore, or things like to these, are all fitting objects of our desire. They are all fit matter for our prayers. They are all things for which we might do well to implore the prayers of our brethren. Whether we have dangers to encounter, or duties to discharge; contributions to convey to strangers for their help, or friends to be visited for our mutual joy; we may lawfully desire earnestly to prosper in our undertakings, we do right to pray, and to ask them to pray, for our success. But whensoever for any earthly blessings we make known our requests unto God, let us not fail to call to mind that these are only to be desired, as they may help us towards attaining unto the joys of heaven.

To minister unto the saints, this was St. Paul's errand to Jerusalem. To carry to the poor Christians in Judæa a contribution which had been raised for them in Greece, this was a journey which he might well ask of God to prosper. But why? For his own gratification? Far from it. For the relief of the distressed; for the payment of a debt justly due, the Gentiles having derived so large profit from the Jews; for the establishment of this important principle, that they who derive advantage in spiritual things, should minister in things carnal unto those who thus assist them; these were the objects which the apostle had at heart; these were the motives of his going; these were the grounds on which he thought it meet to pray that his service might be accepted of the saints. Let us in like manner, when we desire of God success in any good work we have in hand on earth, let us make it always the prayer of our lips, and watch that it be the desire of our hearts, not to fulfil our own will and pleasure, but to promote God's glory, and the good of man.

To be "delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa," is another point for which St. Paul desires the prayers of the Romans in his behalf. The gifts which he had to carry for the relief of the believers, would only aggravate, he was well aware, the wrath and jealousy of his unbelieving countrymen. How fiercely on this occasion their fury raged, may be seen in the Acts of the Apostles. See chap. 21—24. There also we may see how meekly and prudently, and yet also firmly and faithfully, St. Paul behaved under the most cruel persecution. No wonder that he was enabled to conduct himself aright, when he prepared himself by praying unto God for help, and by securing the prayers of his fellow Christians! No wonder that his prayers were heard, when they were offered out of regard to the cause of Christ; when they were accompanied by prudence, fortitude, and zeal; when they were prompted not by selfish fear, but by concern for his unbelieving kinsmen, both that they might not be guilty of his blood, and that he might be spared to persuade them to believe.

"That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." This is the third of the requests here mentioned. And this meeting to commune with those we love, to joy together in the blessings we receive, and to be refreshed by the society, help, and comfort of each other, this also is a fit object for us to desire in our prayers; so it be "by the will of God," if it be asked only so far as God sees fit to give; only so far as He who knows all, knows to be most for our good. Friendship and domestic happiness, the chiefest of earthly blessings, the source of purest earthly joys, even these must not engross our affections; even these must not take precedence in our thoughts, before the will of our Father which is in heaven. Thankful we ought to be for gifts so excellent, watchful to profit by their use, and ready still to bless the name of the Lord, when it pleases Him to refuse or to take them away. Never therefore may we murmur, if hindered in our plans for this most welcome refreshing of the heart! Never may we repine if after having it for a while we are called upon to part with it for ever! Never may we consider any pleasure we have here to be comparable with that of loving God. Never may we love father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, more deeply, or affectionately, than our Saviour Christ!

The salutations of the apostle to his friends at Rome.

1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

|| Or, friends.

9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' || household.

11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the † household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

† Or, friends.

§ 480. *That we ought to love some more than others, and whom.*

The Gospel enjoins love to all mankind. And it has been thought by some that our affections, thus widely diffused, must be rendered too weak and indistinct for the ardour of private friendship. But see how different is the example of the apostle! See how minutely he here mentions, one by one, those in whose welfare he felt deepest interest, those whom he would recommend to the especial kindness of the Romans, or to whom he would wish his own to be especially conveyed! See how he closes not this inestimable letter, full as it is of motives to the most enlarged charity, without these manifest proofs of his own personal affection for the many Christians here mentioned singly by name. Let us carefully observe the various grounds here specified for the regard he felt; that we may hence learn both how right it is for us to love some more than others, and also who they are whom we ought to love the most.

"A servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea;" "she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also;" this is the character of the first person here mentioned. And for her St. Paul makes interest with the Romans, that they would assist her in whatsoever business she had need of them. Let us then be particularly on the watch to help those who have helped many others, to succour those who have succoured ourselves. "Aquila and Priscilla, my helpers in Christ Jesus;" are the next persons mentioned. And these had not only exposed their lives in defence of the apostle, but had been aiding him in the work which was more dear to him than life, the preaching of the Gospel unto the churches of the Gentiles. See Acts 18. 26. Let us then love those especially who labour for the Lord. "Likewise greet the church that is in their house." Let us then love the families and friends of such as these, and the people with whom they are joined as a Christian congregation. Epenetus is saluted for this reason, that he had been "the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ." Let us then count them most worthy of our regard, who are forward in devoting themselves to the service of the Lord. "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." Her work she had bestowed on the apostle and his company, having probably no wealth to give. Let us then honour with a high place in our regard, those who give their time and strength to doing good. "My fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me;" these things, besides that they were his kinsmen and had been fellow prisoners, entitled Andronicus and Junia to a particular salutation from St. Paul. Let us then prefer those for our friends, who are highly esteemed by the most excellent in the earth. Let us prefer those who are before us in the Lord; having more pleasure in learning, than in teaching, in honouring, than in being honoured of those with whom we live. And in like manner to nearly every salutation there is added some hint of reason profitable to us, as shewing us the chief grounds of preference in the choice of our acquaintances and friends.

And note here how entire is the silence of St. Paul as to the worldly rank, or riches, or abilities, of those to whom he sends his friendly greetings. Not the great, not the noble, not the learned, not the rich, these are not the titles by which he names his friends. But "my beloved in the Lord," "our helper in Christ," "approved in Christ," "which laboured much in the Lord," "chosen in the Lord," "all the saints;" these are they, whom the apostle has selected for the expression of his most kind regard; such as these are they, whom God would have us prefer, whether rich or poor, whether great or lowly, for the most favoured place in our society. Oh that whilst we are on earth we may be blest with friends who will keep us in the way to heaven! Oh that when we shall depart this present life we may there dwell with them in happiness for ever!

How much we must labour for unity.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and || simple concerning evil.

20 And the God of peace shall † bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

22 I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in

the Lord.

23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

|| Or, *harmless*.

† Or, *tread*.

§ 481. *Glory to God through Jesus Christ.*

That we should mark them which cause divisions, is not inconsistent with our judging no man. That we should mark them, and also avoid them, is a part of the love we owe to all. For what evil is so great to all as division? What dishonour is so great towards God, as the strife and contention of those, who know it to be their duty to be one in Him? Let us observe therefore who they are that must be avoided. Not those who differ from ourselves, as some would here too hastily conclude, but those who “cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine” here taught by the apostle. Such as these, whether in point of form they agree with us or differ, such as cause dissension, such as foment and multiply dissent, these we must avoid out of the love we bear to all, out of the honour which we would pay unto our Saviour Christ. And this direction is mentioned by St. Paul, in the midst of his kind greetings to his beloved in the Lord; as if purposely to teach us, how meekly, and humbly, and charitably, we must behave, in any such avoiding of our brethren; and also to instruct us, that such avoiding, if thus duly put in practice, is the greatest of all kindness to those whom we avoid.

For see how grievous is their sin, see how deeply they are themselves concerned to take warning against continuing therein! “They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Who then would not wish to save them from deceiving others? Who would not try to guard them against this grievous self-deceit? And what would be more likely to put them on their guard, than to find themselves most diligently avoided by those, who in the whole tenour of their conduct, are seen to be most kind and tender hearted, most humble, most meek, most charitable? The more the obedience of the Romans was spoken of, the more they were noted for their real faith and love, the apostle was the more anxious to impress on them this duty of avoiding the abettors of dissension. He was glad on their behalf that they were willing to obey. But so much the more he would have them pure in faith, wise to understand the truth, and studiously ignorant of error and iniquity. So much the more, in proportion as they were reputed holy, he would have them manifest their aversion to the author of offences. ~~Ob~~ Let us then watch carefully in all we do, that we sanction no loose indifference to the truth, that we cause no division amongst brethren, and no offence contrary to sound doctrine; that we neither in these things deceive ourselves, nor help to delude these self-deceivers!

“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” “The God of hope” was the name mentioned by St. Paul when he would encourage us to have “joy and peace in believing.” Ch. 15. 13. Now that he would impress on us the duty of unity it is “the God of peace.” For in each case it is to God that we must look for the grace which we in either case endeavour to attain. Whether it be peace or hope,

whether it be unity or joy, it is God only who can give us that which we desire, it is in Him that we must trust, and not in ourselves. And in a like spirit there is here repeated both before and after the salutations of St. Paul and his company, this short but comprehensive prayer, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you; Amen." "The grace," that is to say, the free gift, the gracions, undeserved, inestimable gift of God the Father for the sake of God the Son, the gift of forgiveness, the gift of help from heaven to be holy, the gift of God the Holy Ghost, the grace which in this Epistle has been set forth, even salvation to every soul of man that believeth, that grace "be with you. Amen." We salute; but it is God that must give the blessing. We write this Epistle; but it is Christ who herein proclaims these glad tidings. We salute: but we "salute you in the Lord."

And therefore "now," when we have thus set forth all the righteousness of God, the whole compass of his mercy in the free pardon of sinners for the sake of his Son our Lord, now "to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." He, and He alone, "is of power to stablish" us according to the Gospel here declared. That Gospel is "the preaching of Jesus Christ." It is "the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began." For never did men know or guess till now, that the death of one, even of Christ, could atone for the sins of all, and that God would for his sake count sinners to be righteous. But now it is "made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." "By the scriptures of the prophets." See how helpful have been the prophecies in the custody of the Jews for establishing the faith of the Gentiles! "Made known to all nations." See how urgent, how large is the commandment of God! See how far we have been as yet from obeying it! "For the obedience of faith." See how vain is all faith that is without obedience! See how fruitless is all obedience that is not founded on faith! See how only wise is God, who at once forgives the sinner, and makes us detest the sin, confounds in us all thought of merit in our obedience, and yet makes us more than ever zealous to obey!

To Him "be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, 1. 1—3.

St. Paul saluteth the church at Corinth and all Christians.

¹ Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,

² Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that ¹ are sanctified in Christ Jesus, ² called *to*

be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's :

³ Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Acts 15. 9.

² Rom. 1. 7.

§ 482. *The universal obligation of this Epistle.*

Corinth was one of the chief cities in all Greece. Greece had before Rome been the chief nation in the world, and was still eminent above all others in arts and in philosophy. This made it a principal object of attention to the apostle of the Gentiles. At Corinth St. Paul had sojourned a year and six months. And there Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, was beaten before the judgment seat of Gallio; see Acts 18. 17; the same probably whom the apostle now joins with himself in addressing this letter, and whom he describes to be a Christian, by calling him "our brother." How seasonable was this expression of affectionate regard between Sosthenes and St. Paul, when it was one chief object of the apostle's writing, to put a stop to the divisions in the Corinthian church! It is as though he had said: see how well the ruler of the synagogue can agree with the apostle of Jesus Christ! See how he has become our brother by becoming our disciple! Be ye also brethren, even as we!

And this counsel, and all the words of this Epistle, as well as his salutation of grace and peace, St. Paul addresses not only unto "the church of God which is at Corinth," but also to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ." That is to say, he addresses all who are Christians, all who profess to be Christians; all "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus," all that are "called to be saints." His letter may seem in many points suited only for one place and season. He reproves the offences which prevailed in Corinth at that time. He answers questions, and resolves cases, which had been put to him by the Corinthians, for their own particular information. But though the facts to which he alludes are local or temporary, the practice which he enforces, and the motives which he insists upon, these are of universal obligation. They are the word of Him whose word is from everlasting. When we read what was written by St. Paul to the Corinthians, or to any other of the churches he addressed, we read the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. And the doctrines and duties which were throughout revealed, as well as the grace and peace which are set forth in the commencement, these are "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

St. Paul giveth thanks for the Corinthians ; exhorteth to unity.

4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

7 So that ye come behind in no gift: waiting for the † coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 † God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no ‡ divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

† Gr. revelation.

‡ Acts 18. 8.

† 1 Thess. 5. 24.

‡ 2 Pet. 1. 16.

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren; by them *which are* of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of † Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but † Crispus and Gaius;

15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: † not with wisdom of ‡ words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

† Gr. schisms.

‡ Acts 18. 24.

‡ Or, speech.

§ 483. *Against divisions in things spiritual.*

St. Paul gives thanks for the Corinthians, on their behalf. We ought to be thankful for each other no less than for ourselves, and nothing would more plainly prove that we have a charitable interest in the welfare of each other, than for us to thank God for each other's blessings. St. Paul thanks God in behalf of the Corinthians, not for their abundance of worldly wealth, not for their fine climate, fruitful soil, convenient situation, refined manners, or cultivated understanding. No, it is "for the grace of God," given to them "by Jesus Christ." It is for the many spiritual gifts vouchsafed to them, for their many graces of utterance, knowledge, patience; it is for their having the testimony of Christ confirmed in them by the manifestation of these gifts, it is out of his trust that the Lord Jesus Christ would also confirm them blameless unto the end; these are the things for which St. Paul gives thanks, this is the kind of benefits for which we ought to be thankful in behalf of each other. Let us therefore feel a lively interest in the spiritual welfare of our brethren, and we shall then both make it our most earnest prayer in their behalf, that they may be saved; and also give most hearty thanks for such evidences as they shew, of being likely to be blameless "in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." God is faithful. He will make good his promises. He has called us unto the fellowship of his Son. And if we through grace obey the call, He will receive us in the end with joy.

What a firm foundation is thus laid by the apostle for the duty which he desires to enforce, the agreement of Christians in their religion. For what can more incline us to such agreement, than the conviction that we are called into the fellowship of the Son of God? How can we be all one with Him, and not be all one with each other? How can we be blameless in the day of his coming, if we are now at variance? How can we come behind in no good gift, if we fall short in unity and love! And therefore it is "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" that St. Paul beseeches the Corinthians, as brethren, that they all speak the same thing, that there be no division among them. Ten times within the first ten verses of this chapter St. Paul repeats the name of Christ. All the arguments of authority, of kindness, of power to help, of willingness to save, with which the name of Christ is here connected, all these the apostle would now bring to bear upon the duty of agreement in things spiritual. And it is remarkable, that at the end of his second Epistle to the Corinthians, he repeats what he here enjoins at the beginning of the first: "Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." 2 Cor. 13. 11. Let not us then vainly argue that we cannot controul our own opinions, that we cannot answer for that diversity of judgment, which still rends asunder the church of Christ. To "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," must be in some sort within the compass of our ability; or we should not have been thus earnestly exhorted to attempt it.

Shame be therefore to our manifold divisions! Shame be to our party names and distinctions! Shame be to the wide differences and doctrine amongst some! And amongst others, whose doctrines are the same, shame be to their more wanton and inexcusable dissent! Well might St. Paul be thankful that he had baptized so few; lest any should say he had baptized in his own name, with a view to make disciples to some sect of his own! Well might Christian ministers learn from his example, whether they baptize, or preach, to magnify not their party, nor themselves, but Christ! Nothing more surely makes his cross of none effect, than to preach it with the words of human wisdom, with a view to recommend some human system. No one, either in his preaching, or in his practice, ought to seek the honour of any mere party upon earth, but only of the Lord which is in heaven.

The apostle preacheth Christ crucified.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the ¹ power of God.

19 For it is written, ² I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 ³ Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 ⁴ For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

22 For the ⁵ Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, ⁶ He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

¹ Rom. 1. 16.² Is. 29. 14.³ Is. 33. 18.⁴ Rom. 1. 20.⁵ Matt. 12. 38.⁶ Jer. 9. 23.§ 484. *The wisdom of the world opposed to the preaching of the cross.*

The Corinthians, it seems, had fallen into grievous divisions, naming their several sects after different teachers, whose doctrines they professed to follow. St. Paul argues against these evil practices, that there is but one Christ, one Gospel; and testifies that for his own part he had preached among them none other but the cross of Christ. He next describes what the preaching of the cross is, shews how it is opposed to the wisdom of the world, and points out how the weakness of those who had to preach it redounds to the glory of God.

"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." The preaching of the cross, is to preach that Christ Jesus "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." It is to set forth of our blessed Lord, that He is made unto us wisdom, that He gives us a true insight into God's will, and our own duty; that He is made unto us righteousness, is the only meritorious cause of our being counted righteous before God; that He is made unto us sanctification, obtains for us grace from God to be holy, even the Holy Spirit of God to sanctify our hearts; that He is made unto us redemption, redeems us from the curse of the Law, from being bound under penalty of death to do that which we could never do; makes us free from sins past, and free to serve God for the future. To set forth that this is all Christ's doing, and that He did this for us by dying in our behalf, this is the preaching of the cross; this it is which "is the power of God," is mighty through God's help to save them that believe; this it is which to them that perish, to them that will not believe, seems to be no more than foolishness. For see how different is the wisdom of the world! "The world by wisdom knew not God." The wisdom of the world was not able to tell them better, than to worship stocks and stones. The wisdom of the world was not able to prevent them from practising all manner of iniquity. See Romans 1. 23, 24. The wisdom of the world, whether of Gentile or of Jew, could not save them from being guilty in the sight of God. See Romans 2. 1. The wisdom of the world made them stumble at the cross of Christ, and count for foolishness that work, which God had brought to pass, for the saving of mankind. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." In their worldly wisdom they demanded more conclusive evidence, or evidence which they would allow for more conclusive; "a sign," some such plain manifestation of God, as the glories of mount Sinai; "wisdom," some such lengthened arguments, some such refined speculations, as were current in the philosophy of the Greeks. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." And this was proved in the result, in the calling of the early converts, by the fact that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," were preachers of the Gospel.

How few and feeble were the fishermen of Galilee, that they should overthrow the dominion of idolatry, and establish the Gospel in the world; that the faith they preached should be professed by so many millions of the most enlightened nations of the earth! How simple, how unlike to our devices for justifying ourselves, is the plan, by which it has seemed good to God to justify the ungodly! How important is the consequence "that no flesh should glory in his presence!" Let us apply this consequence to ourselves. Let us put our whole trust in God, by believing in his Son Jesus Christ, for all that we now want, for all that we now hope. Let us feel that to God we owe, that through Him we are, what we are "in Christ Jesus." And whatever cause we now have for glorying, let us remember to "glory in the Lord."

The apostle further describeth his preaching.

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, 'came' not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching ²was not with || entieing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not * stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written, ³ Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 ⁴ Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 ⁵ But he that is spiritual † judgeth all things, yet he himself is ‡ judged of no man.

16 ⁶ For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he § may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

¹ Ch. 1. 17.

² 2 Pet. 1. 16.

|| Or, *persuasive*.

* Gr. *be*.

³ Is. 64. 4.

⁴ 2 Pet. 1. 16.

⁵ Prov. 28. 5.

† Or, *discerneth*.

‡ Or, *discerned*.

⁶ Rom. 11. 34. Is. 40. 13.

§ Gr. *shall*.

§ 485. *That we must be led by the Spirit.*

St. Paul would have the Corinthians know, that he at least had laid no foundation in his preaching, for the scandalous divisions of which they now were guilty. He had declared the testimony of God, not the wisdom of man. *He had determined to know nothing among them, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." His own bodily presence was weak, and he had addressed them "in fear and in much trembling," with lively apprehension for their spiritual welfare; not with the confidence of one, who attempted to set up a party for himself. And his speech and preaching were not adorned by figures of eloquence, but confirmed by signs and wonders from on high. This shews us what preaching always ought to be, and what good preaching always is, not an exhibition of the ability of man, but a faithful declaration of the goodness of God. And this shews also, how we ought all to give heed to preaching, not as to what amuses us, ~~not as~~ to what supplies us with matter of debate, but as unto that which is designed by God to instruct us in the way that leadeth unto life.

For this is the highest of all wisdom "among them that are perfect." In the judgment of such as know the whole truth, there is no wisdom equal to the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. For this is that which is described in prophecy, as more than eye had seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived. See Is. 64. 4. Beyond these outward senses, beyond these inward imaginations, man's wisdom cannot reach. But there is a wisdom which they of this world know not, "the wisdom of God in a mystery." And this mystery is now revealed. And this wisdom is able to inform us of that which we can neither see nor conceive, and which yet we are able to understand. The things of which this wisdom tells us are not imaginary, but real. The world which it describes, though not seen by sense, exists at this moment all around us and about us, most real, most excellent, most abiding.

And this wisdom "God ordained before the world unto our glory." And these things God has revealed "unto us by his Spirit;" that Spirit by which prophets spake, that Spirit by which apostles wrote, the Spirit which is one with the Father, and one with the ever blessed Son. For it is through the working of the Spirit, preventing and assisting us, that we receive the things which God has revealed, here described as things "freely given to us of God." So that the Spirit of God, which alone knoweth the things of God, this Spirit is God. And this Spirit, sometimes called the Holy Ghost, must influence our hearts for good, when we receive the things spiritual which are here spoken of. By nature we are incapable of discerning them. By grace we see all, understand all, receive all. Oh let us not be content with a part! Let us not cease to pray and study, let us wait on ordinances, let us call on God, till we have attained to the proficiency of those who judge "all things," who are able to discern all the truth. These are they who are led by the Spirit. These are they who follow where He leads, who live as He directs them. These are they who build not on the judgment of man, who follow not the devices of any human teacher, who count not that any one of their fellow creatures is competent, by his own wit or wisdom, to instruct them in the mind of the Lord; but resort to the word of God, and to the preaching of his ministers in the church, that by the use of the very means ordained by Him they may have the mind of Christ.

That our progress must be gradual.

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk *as* men?

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave

the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

|| Or, factions.

• Gr. according to man?

† Ps. 62. 12. Gal. 6. 5.

† Or, tillage.

§ 486. *The only foundation.*

The Corinthians had probably complained against St. Paul that he had not taught them the whole extent of Christian truth. For here he tells them how it came to pass that he could not speak to them "as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." This was because in fact they were yet but carnal. They were not sufficiently prepared by faith and grace, to receive what must be spiritually discerned, see ch. 2. 14; to know what only God can give us to understand, "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." Eph. 3. 18. And that the Corinthians were still carnal when he wrote, St. Paul proves by the very divisions of which he here complains. One said, "I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." They divided themselves into parties and sects, into distinct religious societies, calling themselves by the names of their favourite teachers. Hence we learn that it is a proof of a carnal state of mind thus to form or to foment divisions in the church of Christ. In differences about religion, it is no less true than in our temporal affairs, that wars and fightings come of ruling ourselves after our lusts. See James 4. 1. It is the pride we feel in our own judgment, or the trust we vainly place in our own teacher; it is the desire we entertain to be allowed in sin whilst we profess devotion to the Lord, or a determination to enjoy the things of earth, whilst yet we are instructed to hope for heaven; these lusts, and others like to these, they are, which still break up into conflicting sects the most enlightened portion of the Christian world. Let us look to it then that we ourselves be not "yet carnal." Let us examine whether we in any way take part in the sin of schism. Let us watch and pray that we take part in it no more.

Here we see of what great importance it is for this end, that we have a right conception of the office of a minister, that we hold not men's persons in admiration, see Jude 16, but look to God in all, as to the Giver of all good. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" The success of ministers is of God's giving. This they are bound to know concerning themselves. This the rest are bound to feel towards them. The people are God's husbandry, not theirs. They are but labourers under Him who is the Lord. But may the labourer take credit for the master's work? May he that plants, or he that waters, be supposed to give the increase? May he that builds be thought to be the maker of the house, when all the materials employed, and the skill whereby they were put together, are given us by Him who made both us and all things? If not, so neither may we ascribe to ministers the honour which is due unto our Lord. How then dare we follow them as leaders of sects? How venture to call ourselves by their names? And how, if we thus do, can we escape the fearful charge, "are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

And here also we may see that the progress of Christian children should be gradual, that they who are carnal must be fed as here described, with milk; must have one portion of the Gospel explained to them at first, and so be brought on from strength to strength, till they are able to understand the whole. But this means not that we may in any case misrepresent the truth, only that we had better not press all truth at once upon the attention of those, to whom it all is strange; and that they also at the first should be content to know in part. But our foundation must be right and sound; though it be the foundation only. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And this the apostle had laid most carefully with the Corinthians, amongst whom he had determined not to make known any thing, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Ch. 2. 2. This then must be the foundation of all our teaching, faith in Christ crucified. This must be taught, when as yet we teach nothing else; this must be learnt and known, though we learn and know nothing else, Christ crucified for the sins of man.

God grant that amongst us this foundation may be rightly laid! God grant that we may build thereon what our Lord desires, "a city that is at unity in itself." Ps. 122. 3.

That we are the temple of the Holy Ghost.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it * shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

16 ¹ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man || defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which

* Gr. is revealed.

¹ Ch. 6. 19.

|| Or, destroyed.

² Job 5. 13.

³ Ps. 94. 11.

temple ye are.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ² He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, ³ The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's;

22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's;

23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

§ 487. *Rules for not defiling the temple of God.*

The true foundation of all Christian doctrine is Jesus Christ, and redemption through Him. With this foundation many men have connected various false devices of their own. And thus there have been formed sects of Christians, as unlike to what Christians ought to be, as wood, hay, or stubble is unlike to gold, silver, or precious stones. But "every man's work shall be made manifest." It shall certainly be known, which have laid the right foundation, and which have built thereon a building worthy of it. "For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire." The day of persecution, the fiery trials to which the early Christians were exposed, these were likely to "try every man's work of what sort it" was. Much more the day of judgment, when the flames of wrath shall be revealed against all unrighteousness, much more will this fire, and this day bring to light the great difference there is, between preaching the Gospel of our Lord, and promoting the interests of a sect; between building up jewels for the crown of Christ, or adding fuel to that fire which shall burn up the ungodly.

"If any man's work abide," if the teacher have built aright on the right foundation, if to the preaching of Christ crucified he has added the doctrines of grace and holiness, of love, and hope, and peace, and joy, "he shall receive a reward." They who so teach and they who so learn the truth, these through the great goodness of our God, and the abundant merits of our Saviour Christ, shall be admitted to everlasting life. But "if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss." The pains taken by the teacher of false doctrine are in vain, for vain is the religion which his hearers learn. The work shall be burned. The false views of God, and of his dealings, of themselves, and of their duties, of their Saviour, and of his grace, which these propagate in the world, shall be doomed to perish. And they who spread them, and they who are misled by them, shall with difficulty escape the sentence of destruction. "He himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." How watchful ought these words to make us, that we neither teach nor listen to the enticing sound of man's wisdom; how careful to regard ourselves, and all of our community, as God's temple, by no means to be defiled; never to be profaned by the wilful admission of false brethren into our church, or of false doctrine into our hearts! "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." We, if we be real Christians, we are that temple. Let us not then defile ourselves. Let us not defile our hands by sinful practice. Let us not defile our souls by sinful thoughts. Let us not defile that Christian church, that holy temple of the Lord, by receiving, or not resisting, those unsound doctrines, which are plainly inconsistent with the Gospel.

And for this end observe what it is that the apostle chiefly counsels. First, "let no man deceive himself." In the prevalence of false doctrines, they who wish to be deceived are they who are deceived. They deceive their own selves. They love the darkness rather than the light. Their pride, their passions, or their worldly interest, is at variance with true religion. And they prefer therefore that which is false. Let us remember that however we might thus deceive ourselves, God knows all, and cannot be deceived. Next, let no one be puffed up with the notion of his own wisdom. This is what leads many into the path of error. What they cannot understand they think must be wrong. Or what they cannot answer must be right. Such men must first themselves become as fools in their own eyes. They must see themselves to be foolish in respect of heavenly wisdom. And they must meekly submit to be taught by Him who "knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Thirdly, we must not "glory in men." We must not fondly attach ourselves to any earthly teachers; we must not be proud of them because they are ours. We must remember that we have God to teach both us and them. And whilst we honour them as God's servants, we must call no man our master upon earth, knowing that we are not theirs but Christ's, and that through Christ we are, as He is, "God's."

God grant that we may not too highly rate ourselves, or any thing that is ours! God grant we may never be deceived in the pursuit of truth! God grant we may not deceive ourselves!

The just view of the office of a minister.

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's * judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 † Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the

hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

7 For who † maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

* Gr. day.

† Matt. 7. 1. Rom. 2. 1.

† Gr. distinguisheth thee?

§ 488. *That we have nothing which we have not received.*

The divisions prevalent in the church of the Corinthians had been connected with undue attachment to particular teachers. And this has been the case with most divisions amongst Christians in all ages of the church. Pride, the pride of teachers in their gifts, and the pride of the people in their teachers, pride has engendered strife and persecution, the following after strange doctrine, called heresy, and the rending of church communion, which is schism. To all therefore it must be profitable to note, how St. Paul provides against this vain partiality, by setting forth the true nature and authority of the Christian ministry. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Now a minister means a servant. And a steward is one who has the goods of another entrusted to his care. This was the highest dignity of an apostle, and this must be the highest aim of a Christian pastor, to be the servant of the Lord, whose commission he bears, a helper of his brethren in things spiritual, and a steward of those mysteries, which are in Christ revealed, to dispense them according to his Master's will.

It is the first point in the character of a steward "that a man be found faithful." So also in a minister there can be no greater fault, than to take unto himself the honour which belongs to his Lord. But this is the very fault which leads to division among Christians, when ministers attach parties to themselves. And in this also the people are alike guilty of offence, if they form themselves in parties, pass judgments on their ministers, censure one, and idolize another. And, therefore, the apostle here protests that he will not be judged by man's judgment, declares that he would not so much as judge himself, and warns the Corinthians to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." It is the Master's office to pronounce praise or censure on the work of his servants. He only who employs the steward has any right to call him to account. How mad then must it be in members of the flock, to judge them who are set over them in the Lord! How vain in ministers to justify and extol themselves, when even St. Paul, who knew nothing by himself, who was conscious of no wilful neglect in his apostleship, yet felt that he was not thereby justified, and that he could be judged only by the Lord!

These things he wrote of himself, and of Apollos, meaning that the Corinthians should apply what was said to their other teachers; that they might learn in Paul and Apollos not to think of any teacher above that which he had written to them, so that no one of them might be "puffed up for one against another," none pride themselves in being followers of one teacher in opposition to another. "For who," adds he, "who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" These questions may be well applied by ministers to their several gifts and acquirements, to the success which attends their labours in the ministry, and to the encouragement they meet with in the affections of the people. Parishes and congregations, and each member of the same, must apply the same questions to themselves, in regard to whatever privileges they enjoy, in the gifts and graces of their ministers. They must well consider to whom it is that they are indebted for these and all other their advantages; and they must be careful to give to God the praise of what they have, and to pray to Him that He would give them, in his good time, that which is yet wanting to the fulfilment of their joy. And thus also in all our blessings, whether of nature or of grace, whether they relate to our comfort upon earth, or to our hopes of heaven, whereinsoever we fare better than our brethren, let us repress all inclination to self sufficiency and pride, by asking ourselves the question here insisted on by St. Paul, "now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Thus might we, whatever advantages we possess, be humble in our estimate of ourselves. And whatsoever are withheld from us by our Father which is in heaven, we might be still contented, cheerful, joyful, thankful.

The example of the apostles.

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a *spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 ¹And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 ²Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as

my beloved sons I warn you.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 ³But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

* Gr. theatre.

¹ Acts 20. 34. ¹ Thess. 2. 9. ² Thess. 3. 8.

² Matt. 5. 44.

³ Acts 19. 21.

⁴ Jam. 4. 15.

§ 489. *Candour and humility.*

The apostle here sets forth before the Corinthians an example of that humility which he would have them to practise. "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me;" to which we may add, what he adds afterwards in this Epistle, "even as I also am of Christ." Ch. 11. 1. And in what would St. Paul here have us follow him? In submitting to privations and disgrace, in being content to be made a spectacle unto the world, in hungering and thirsting, in being reviled, persecuted, and defamed, and in becoming as the offscouring of the earth. And to make this humiliation more manifest, he contrasts it with the self sufficiency of the Corinthians. "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us." And again, "we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise;" that is to say, they thought themselves to be so. "We are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised." Now these are chief points in humility, to be content in being below others; to bear with the arrogant, not to grudge them what excellence they have, not to wish them evil, but rather with St. Paul to say, "I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you;" we should be glad for you to enjoy all the blessings you pretend to; we should be glad to share them with you. And further, we must be willing to return good for evil; "being reviled, we bless." And this we should do, more often, more easily, more heartily, if we were deeply sensible that no revilings we can meet with, no insult, injury, or scorn, is worse than for our sins we most richly deserve.

Thus St. Paul warned his sons, whom he had converted to be Christians, and before whom he could, consistently with true humility, set forth, as their father in Christ Jesus, his own example. And this example he further pressed on them, by sending to them Timotheus, to bring them into remembrance of his ways, which were in Christ, as he taught every where in every church. Let us also, who are indebted to this apostle, under God, for some of the most instructive portions of the Gospel, endeavour to be followers of him, even as he was of Christ. Have we any one in our minds who underrates us, who extols himself in the comparison, who sets up for being wise, and strong, and honourable, whether in things temporal or spiritual, and who has no sufficient ground for these pretensions? Let us endeavour without flattery or falsehood to give such an one full credit for all the advantages he really has; and to shew that in what he has not, we have no wish to triumph in his deficiencies. Let us rather wish, and shew that we desire in his behalf, that he might have the full enjoyment of all that he pretends to. Let us take interest in his welfare as if we would share in it ourselves, instead of grudging it us if it were inconsistent with our own.

And for our improvement in this grace of humility, let us remember that the day must come, when every man's work will be tried. St. Paul warned the Corinthians not to be puffed up as though he would not come to them. Let not us either encourage in ourselves a vain estimate of our own condition, by not sufficiently considering how certainly, and how soon, God will bring all we do before the judgment seat of Christ. What will we? Would we have Him who then shall judge, would we have Him come to us "with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?" Nothing is more certain of that day, than that he who now exalts himself shall be then abased. Nothing is more needful for us to remember, of the kingdom of God, whether we interpret it of our present dispensation, or of that which shall be hereafter, than that it is "not in word, but in power." Let not then our religion be in profession, but in deed. For God's threatenings and his promises, the salvation of them that believe, and the eternal destruction of the disobedient, these will be in very deed and truth.

Primitive discipline.

1 It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 ¹ For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have ^{||} judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed,

* 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 ² To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that ³ a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ

our passover * is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep [†] the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

¹ Col. 2. 5.

^{||} Or, *determined*.

² 1 Tim. 1. 20.

³ Gal. 5. 9.

* Or, *is slain*.

[†] Or, *holyday*.

§ 490. *How we may discipline ourselves.*

In this chapter we find directions for that kind of public discipline which was practised in the primitive church; which is still attempted, though with ill success, in some sects of professing Christians; and which is mentioned in our own liturgy as a thing to be desired. The Corinthian converts had not only retained in their society a very gross offender, but were puffed up, as it should seem, by his belonging to their numbers, probably because of his rank, or wealth, or ability. Now it was their duty, in any case, to mourn most deeply for their brother's sin. But in a case so extreme as this, they were not only to mourn, and to feel their shame, but to pronounce against the offender the most severe judgment of the church, to sentence him in the name of the Lord Jesus, as though the apostle himself were present, to be thrust out of the church, Christ's kingdom upon earth, into the world, the kingdom of the evil one; and to be subjected to those sufferings of the body, which are Satan's work, in order that his soul, thus chastened, might "be saved in the day of the Lord."

The second point of discipline here insisted on, is that Christians should shut out from their society all such manifest sinners as are here mentioned, fornicators, the covetous, extortioners, railers, drunkards, idolaters. "With such an one no not to eat;" with such as were guilty of these sins, having become professors of the faith. For at the time when this was written, the greater part of the Corinthians were still professed heathens. And there were not the same reasons for not keeping company with heathens who committed any such sin. For they were not so well aware of its sinfulness. They brought no scandal on the Gospel. Christians had no commission to judge them in this manner. It was only by consorting with them that a Christian could hope to win them to the truth. And since nearly all the heathens practised these enormities, one must needs have gone out of the world, to avoid all those that were guilty. Oh how sad is the reflection that this is not far from true of the professing Christian world! Oh how seldom could we go out into a numerous company, if we would not eat with any one noted for covetousness, or extortion, railing, drunkenness, or uncleanness.

How far then ought we to put in practice these directions, now that all, or nearly all, profess to believe? Are any so notoriously not in earnest, that they stand in the same place with respect to zealous Christians, as the heathen to the primitive believers? Or can we so well know which are in earnest, and which not, as when the faith exposed professors to persecution? And do not our many scandalous divisions, form a fatal barrier to effectual discipline; the proselyting zeal of the conflicting sects, setting up so many cities of refuge for those, who should be cast out from the spiritual Jerusalem? These questions it may be hard to settle. But this we cannot fail to know, that it is good for us, either with or without discipline, to abstain as far as possible from the society of those, who continue in wilful sin; to prefer always, and choose, as far as possible, for our friends, those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; not to glory, or be puffed up, at having those in our community, whose private vices, set against their rank or talents, ought to fill us with tenfold shame; and above all, to purge out of our own hearts the leaven of malice and wickedness, to keep no longer any company with our sins.

God grant that by exercising strict discipline on ourselves, by associating where we can with the excellent of the earth, and by helping to convert to holiness the very worst of all we meet with, we may keep throughout our lives a continual feast; in thankful remembrance of this miracle of love, that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us!"

Against going to law before unbelievers.

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you,

because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves* to be defrauded?

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

§ 491. *How we ought to avoid lawsuits.*

These directions very obviously refer to the duties of a Christian society, whilst it was surrounded by professed unbelievers. These are here called "the unjust." Whilst to Christians there is given the name of "the saints." Let this name remind us of what we ought to be, holy unto the Lord. Let us watch that we never use in contempt or scorn this name, or any other which like this has been applied in Scripture to the praise of believers. Let us consider how high is the dignity which is implied in this our calling. We are holy. We are set apart for this service of God. We are stamped with his image, sealed for his salvation. We are commissioned to "judge the world," nay, to "judge angels;" by the holiness of our lives to bear testimony now, and to rise up in the judgment hereafter, against wicked men, and against evil spirits; and perhaps also, in the day of the Lord, to sit by Him on the throne of judgment. See Rev. 3. 21. Oh how can we then so madly waste our time, disgrace our calling, and neglect our invaluable privileges, by caring for the pleasures or the gains of earth, by still harbouring the lusts of the flesh, by still wrangling and contending for the possessions of the world?

St. Paul on these grounds admonishes believers, in case of any dispute with one another, to bring it before the judgment of their brethren, and not to go to law in the heathen courts. Even they that were "least esteemed in the church," would, in such a case, be more fit to give decision than the judges of the heathen. For the conscientious opinion of a mind enlightened by the truth, ought to be more satisfactory to a Christian, than the decision of laws made and administered without reference to the will of God. And further, it would be better for Christians to take wrong, to suffer themselves to be defrauded, rather than thus exhibit to the scandal of unbelievers their many remaining infirmities. Hence we may learn that we also, though living in a Christian land, and under statutes which defer to the authority of the Gospel, ought to be averse to go to law with one another. We ought to prefer the private arbitration of Christian friends, of such as we consider devout believers, to the risk of scandal which may arise to others, from our litigation in the public courts; and the risk of detriment to the justice of our cause, from the lack of Christian principle in those who there may handle it. Nay, rather we ought to take wrong, to suffer ourselves to be defrauded, to put up cheerfully with the loss of worldly goods, with robbery, or injustice, or insolent assaults, rather than by resistance, and taking measures for redress, become partakers of the spirit of revenge. How much more then must we watch against ourselves, that we defraud not, that we do not wrong! How much more must we take heed, that by no aggression of ours we provoke any lawsuit on our brother's part.

Let us not be deceived. They who wilfully do wrong "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." If we are saints indeed, if we have been washed "by the washing of regeneration," Tit. 3. 5, if sanctified by the Holy Ghost, if "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," we are hereby so much the more strictly bound to do no wrong to each other, to commit no sin against the Lord. This warning St. Paul thought needful to the saints that were at Corinth. Is it not also necessary for us? Have we not great need to be reminded, that none guilty of the gross sins here specified, shall be admitted to the enjoyment of those good things, which God hath prepared for them that love Him? Are we not very apt to be deceived in this matter? Are we not very ready to suppose, that the practices of uncleanness, or uncharitableness, are in some way compatible with the hopes of heaven? Are we not most willing to believe, that our Christian privileges in some measure make more venial in us the very sins, which as Christians we have most solemnly renounced? This however we here see is only self deceit. This is only the snare of our adversary the devil. The word of God, which cannot lie, has left on record against all who do such things, especially if they be believers, that they "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Against the sins of uncleanness.

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not || expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

|| Or, profitable.

§ 492. *The honour due unto the body.*

The word “expedient,” in Scripture, means not what is merely useful towards our present advantage, but what is most helpful to our eternal interests. As for instance, in the case of meats here alluded to, it was lawful for the Corinthians to eat any kind of meat; that is to say, there was no unlawfulness in the thing itself. And yet if there were any meat which could not be eaten without scandal to the beholders, from this it was expedient to abstain. It being far more for our endless good to avoid giving offence unto our brethren, than to enjoy the blessings which God has given us on earth, or the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Let this then be our notion of what is expedient. Nay let this be our notion of what to us is lawful. Let that which would else be lawful, be no longer lawful in our eyes, if it would be prejudicial to the progress of the Gospel, if it would be a hinderance to the salvation of our brethren. Whether it be in our food, or in our dress, in our business or our amusements, in the discharge of duties or the exercise of rights, let us consider always, not only how far we may go consistently with the letter of our law, but where we ought to stop according to the spirit of it. What is not expedient for our own progress in piety, what is not expedient for the spiritual welfare of our brethren, this let us hold to be no longer lawful.

Thus there are things which in some cases are lawful, and in others not. But these must never be confounded with such gross transgressions as that of which St. Paul next speaks. Though it be true that there are “meats for the belly, and the belly for meats,” though these things are given for our use and enjoyment, subject only to the cautions above mentioned, and to the sentence here further added, that “God shall destroy both it and them;” yet we must not suppose that in like manner we are free to partake of the pleasures of impurity. “The body is not for fornication.” The body is nourished by food, not in order that it should serve sin, but in order that it may live “for the Lord.” And also the Lord is “for the body;” He died for it, to save it from sin, to raise it unto holiness of living, to raise it up unto everlasting life. “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.” How sacred should the body be now esteemed by ourselves, with what temperance should we restrain its appetites, with what reverence conceal its nakedness, with what patience put up with its infirmities, when we consider the great and glorious privileges here assured to it in the word of God! The Lord is for it. God will raise it up. It is a member of Christ. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It has been bought with a price, even redeemed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus.

God forbid that Christians should defile themselves by this sin, of which though the heathen might make light, the word of God here plainly tells us, that it is to sin against our own bodies! God forbid that we should take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot! God forbid that in any Christian country the shameless practice of the profligate, should confound, in the apprehension of the young, the broad distinction between right and wrong; or avail to obliterate in our eyes that brand of infamy to ourselves, and indignity to the honour of our Lord, which is here stamped upon all manner of uncleanness! Let us be joined unto the Lord in one spirit. And how could we then bear to think of affronting Him, by becoming one body with an harlot? Let us “flee fornication.” Let us know that it is our highest wisdom, and our best of courage, to shrink from the approaches of temptation. Let us glorify God, in our body as well as in our spirit. For both are his; both made by Him; both purchased anew by that which is above all price, the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

May God make all Christians sensible that both in body and soul they belong to Christ! May God turn the hearts of those who live unto the flesh, that they through the Spirit may mortify its lusts! May God especially have mercy on those the most miserable of the weaker sex, who have been ensnared to gratify the desires of the strong! May He move them to repent! And the more they have to be forgiven, may He move them to love Him more!

Of marriage.

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

2 Nevertheless, *to avoid fornication*, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

6 But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment.

7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, *It is good for them if they abide even as I.*

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for

it is better to marry than to burn.

10 And unto the married I command, *yet not I but the Lord*, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us * to peace.

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?

* Gr. in peace.

§ 493. *Directions to the married.*

St. Paul in this chapter proceeds to give directions in several points of practice, on which he had been consulted by the Corinthians. First he declares generally that a single state of life is excellent. Let those then who have been called to that condition, rejoice in their calling before God; not murmuring at his dispensations, but striving to improve them to his greater glory. Next he declares no less generally "let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband." So that for the reason which is here assigned, marriage also is honourable in all. And they that are married are also instructed how entirely they belong unto each other. Whence they should learn in all things to defer to the wants and wishes of each other, seeking to regulate each severally their own by a devout submission to the will of God. "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." It is in the way of giving leave, and not as though he were enjoining a duty, that the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, thus directs to marry, and gives instructions to the married. For he wishes rather that all men were even as himself; not that all were single, but that all were capable of living single, as he did, in safety. When, however, we consider, how few have this gift of God, when we remember what deep feelings of the heart are connected with the questions here resolved, and how much of happiness or misery depends upon the principles here laid down; most thankful we ought to be that there is allowed to man this relief under the burden of his fiery trials, this solace of love not unrequited upon earth, to cheer him in his way to heaven.

These general principles are now next applied to the three distinct cases following. First, of widowers and widows. It is good for them to abide like the apostle, single. But it is good also, for the reasons before assigned, to marry. It is good to do any thing rather than to sin; rather than to sin, in thought, or word, or deed. Next of those that are married, the apostle had been asked, whether by their solemn vows of holiness the converts were required to devote themselves to the restraint of a single life. Here he observes there was an express commandment of the Lord; namely, that "whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery." Matt. 5. 32. So that the believing husband might not put away his wife, nor the believing wife depart from her husband. Or in case she should depart, perhaps driven against her will to separation, for her faith's sake, by an unbelieving husband; then she must remain unmarried, she must be reconciled to her own husband, or have none. Thirdly, as to the question whether a believing husband were bound to put away an unbelieving wife, and whether a believing wife were bound to leave an unbelieving husband, though he should not himself wish to separate, here St. Paul observes he was not able to quote any express commandment of the Lord. And therefore as his apostle he determines, that no such separation is necessary. For the unbeliever is in such case sanctified by the believer. And the children of the two are entitled to the privileges of the one. If the unbelieving party will separate, he may. But the believing party is not to raise the scruple, is to remember that "God hath called us to peace," is to hope that under the blessing of God the other party may be thus won to believe and to be saved. Let those then who being married have opposite views of religion, or different degrees of religious impression, hence learn to follow after peace with one another, as the best way to help each other towards peace with God.

Let each abide in his own calling.

17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's * freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant.

23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

* Gr. *made free*.

25 Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present || distress. *I say*, that it is good for a man so to be.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

|| Or, *necessity*.

§ 494 *The inward change.*

How great must have been the zeal, how lively the faith of the primitive converts, that they should have been ready, if St. Paul had so directed, to surrender their social and domestic rights, in deference to the doctrines of the Gospel! But in this matter, as he instructed them, their faith was misapplied, their zeal outran their discretion. Thrice he here declares that it was the duty of each to abide in the same calling, in the same state and condition of life, wherein each was, when he became a Christian. This was the rule ordained by the apostle in all churches. This is a decision most helpful to convince us, that it is in the heart, and not merely in the outward state of life, that the Gospel must work its chiefest change. It matters not whether a man be circumcised or uncircumcised. But it matters much whether he keep or transgress the commandments of God. It mattered little whether the convert were a servant, such as servants then were, slaves, the property of their masters. Though if they could by fair means obtain their freedom, they were recommended to "use it rather;" they were reminded that having been bought by Christ "with a price," it was beneath their worth, as his people, to be the slaves of men. But chiefly they were to consider the duty and privileges of being devoted unto Christ; that if called being free, they were still his servants, bound to do all his pleasure; if called being slaves, still his freemen, free to enjoy all his grace.

The same principle is next applied to the case of those who became Christians whilst yet unmarried. Here, as before, St. Paul observes, that he has no express commandment of Christ to refer to. He therefore gives his own judgment as an apostle, as one who by the very signal mercy of the Lord, had been entrusted with the sacred charge, of declaring his will unto the church. And his judgment is this, that "for the present distress," during the period of persecution then impending on Christians, it was good for the unmarried "so to be," to continue as they were, unmarried. And yet if they were to marry, for reasons of sufficient weight, there would be no sin in their doing so. They would encounter more of "trouble in the flesh." They would meet with more difficulty in the present life, because of the troubles of the church. "But I spare you." This helps to explain what he had said before, of speaking in the way of permission. See ver. 6. It is as if he had here said, I will not press these difficulties, I will not too strongly urge you to abstain from marrying for fear of the coming troubles. I know the force of natural affection; I am aware of the weakness of the flesh; I may not limit what God has not limited; I permit you, as the apostle of the Lord, I permit you, even under "the present distress," to marry when you so see fit.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short;" here is again introduced the true key to all these difficulties, that which opens every case of human conduct; eternity is at hand, and what we do on earth is of consequence only as it helps us towards heaven. Whether we have, or have not, the blessings of the married state, whether liberty or bondage be our lot, whether our portion here be plenteousness of tears, or abundance of joy, whether our possessions be large or small, whether our interest in the world much or little, in any case time hastens, the world fast fades away, and the hour is at hand, when it will chiefly be inquired, what use we have made of what we had, whether we have cared mainly for treasure in heaven, whether we have reserved the best of our affections for our Lord. This is the condition we are in any case to aim at. This is the change which we must labour for, that which is within; the circumcision of the heart, freedom from sin, devotion to our Lord, and to have the soul so knit together unto Him, in spiritual marriage, as to be one with Him, and He one with us.

St. Paul would have us without carefulness.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife.

34 There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband.

35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of

her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

38 So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

§ 495. *The authority of parents in the marriage of their children.*

"But I would have you without carefulness." Whether we be married or unmarried this must be our continual frame of mind, to take no anxious thought for the morrow, to care chiefly for the things that belong to the Lord; never to let these be displaced in our regard by the "things that are of the world," how we may please each other. And this, St. Paul observes, is the difference "between a wife and a virgin," as also between a married and unmarried man. This is the only difference which can give one state any advantage over the other; that which sets us most free to devote ourselves to Christ. And therefore the apostle adds that he speaks this for our profit. He would not so recommend a single state as to cast a snare upon us. He pleads not for any peculiar holiness in the state itself. But he points out that it offers less temptation in a time of persecution; for the fewer ties one has on earth, the less likely one should be to be tempted to renounce the faith, for the sake of saving life. And he also states, that in general, for those who have the gift from God, there is greater opportunity in the single state to "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

Let none then choose to be unmarried, merely that they may have greater liberty to attend upon the world, merely that they may more largely enjoy their pleasure, or more quickly increase their store. Nor let any, because the church is not now persecuted, enter rashly or wantonly into the marriage state, as if it could not now distract their attention from waiting on the Lord, and endanger their everlasting peace. That we may better wait upon his service, should be the very ground of our preferring one condition to the other. And when to this we add prudence in our choice, patience in putting up with difficulty or delay, thankfulness in the fulfilling of our affections, and care taken to love no one on the earth in comparison with our Lord and Saviour; then we may hope that our marrying is approved by Him, and that it will help forward, not hinder, our salvation.

The last point on which St. Paul here gives directions, is the authority of a parent in directing the decision of a child, in favour of either kind of life. First we see he is to consult her wishes. And if he has reason to think that it would be unkind in him, to press the advantages of a single state, he is at liberty, notwithstanding the preference here given to that state by St. Paul, he is at liberty to "do what he will," to indulge the fond feelings of a father's heart, and to "let them," the two who have engaged the affections of each other, to "let them marry." Thus does the apostle again spare them. See ver. 28. Thus does he allow, that even under "the present distress," ver. 26, the parent might, consistently with his duty to his children, permit them to enter into the marriage state. Otherwise, if there be "no necessity," no strong affections entertained, if the father be stedfast in his heart, and the child be not hopelessly averse, "he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." How firmly does the apostle here establish in this most weighty matter the authority of parents! How carefully does he guard it from abuse! How entirely would he have them to be guided, by regard for the real welfare of their children! How plainly would he teach children to obey the declared decision of their parents! But this is only up to the point of marriage. From that time "the wife is bound by the law," not to the parent, but to the husband. And if her husband be dead, she is then "at liberty to be married to whom she will." The father does not regain the same right to decide. She is at liberty. But it is "only in the Lord." She is still bound to do the Lord's will. And if she follow the judgment of his inspired apostle, she will think herself happier as she is. "In the Lord." This is the limit of her liberty. This must be the rule of her choice. Let this also be the ground of our decision, in any other choice which we have to make. Let this be the liberty we enjoy, let this be the measure of our enjoyment, let this be the ground of our enjoying it, that our joy is to do the will of Christ, our liberty is "in the Lord."

Of eating meats offered to idols, or in the idol's temple.

1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that *there is none other God but one.*

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us *there is but one God*, the Father, of whom *are all things*, and we *||* in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are all things*, and we by him.

7 Howbeit *there is not in every man that knowledge*: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat

it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, * are we the better; neither, if we eat not, † are we the worse.

9 But take heed lest by any means this ‡ liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be ¶ emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

|| Or, for him, Rom. 11. 36.

† Or, power.

* Or, have we the more.

† Or, have we the less.

¶ Gr. edified.

§ 496. *The extent of our Christian liberty, and the limits of its use.*

The converts at Corinth had for the most part been idolaters. And so great was the number of their false gods, and superstitious offerings, that the chief part of the meat sold in the markets came from animals that had first been offered in idol sacrifice, and the chief social entertainments of the people consisted in feasts held in idol temples. Might then a Christian conscientiously partake of any such food? Might he sit down to eat in any such temple? The apostle in his reply admits that an idol is "nothing in the world." So that in the thing itself, considered by itself, there could be neither good nor evil; in eating, either at an idol's temple, or of what had been once offered to an idol. Here therefore, let us carefully observe, that "there is but one God, the Father," "and one Lord Jesus Christ;" that by Him, even by God the Lord, are all things, and we "in him," and "by him;" that an idol is therefore nothing; that "neither, if we eat are we the better; that neither, if we eat not, are we the worse;" and that such being the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we ought not to mistake needless scruples for real tenderness of conscience.

But in the next place let us note that there is "not in every man that knowledge." We may know or be persuaded of ourselves or of our party, that "we all have knowledge." But we ought to remember, that those who differ from us on points like these, may not have attained to the same degree of information. Let not then this our knowledge puff us up. For if it do, it were better for us not to know at all. And let us remember that this is the tendency of knowledge, to puff up; this is the peril of temptation to which knowledge exposes us. Whereas "charity edifieth." This is the tendency of love; it helps forward both ourselves and our brethren, in the way to heaven; nay it helps us also to know God; for "the same," that is to say God, "is known of him" that loves. Let us then enlarge our knowledge by our charity. And if in any matter like this which is here mentioned, we seem to know more than our neighbours; let us be ready, always out of deference to their scruples, to refrain from the enjoyment of our greater liberty. We are not bound to use all the liberty we have. We are not enjoined to eat meat offered to idols. We shall do no dishonour to God, we shall transgress no commandment of the Lord, by never sitting down at all in an idol's temple. Or whatever else be the license here permitted us, we shall lose no one step in our Christian proficiency, we shall be no further from heaven than before, if we deny ourselves the permitted pleasure, if we limit our own permitted liberty.

But how great on the other hand is our loss, if we mislead our brother into sin! And how plain is his sin doing that which he reckons sinful, though he be mistaken in so reckoning! The weak brother perishes, if he act against his conscience, though his conscience, had he known better, would not condemn him. Let us take heed then for ourselves, that we obey with reverence this inward monitor. Let us take all means in our power to enlighten it, by the word of God, and by prayer, by the ordinances and ministry of the church. Let us rejoice to enlarge its liberty, to the full extent of the free gift of God. But let us not presume to advance one single step beyond what we can clearly see to be allowed. And let us not dare to tempt our brother to any the least of such presumption. To "sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience," is to "sin against Christ." It is to grieve the Lord who gave Himself for us. It is to rob Him of his honour. It is to take the part of his adversary and ours, the part of tempting his people to their fall. Wherefore, whatsoever it be that would thus make our brethren to offend, however lawful we may count it for ourselves, let us count it for their sakes forbidden us, let us resolve that we will not do it, as long as life shall last, lest we make our brethren to offend.

St. Paul answereth them that examine him.

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

|| Or, woman.

¹ Deut. 25. 4.

² Rom. 15. 27.

³ Deut. 18. 1.

* Or, feed.

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

11 * If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

12 If others be partakers of *this* power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 * Do ye not know that they, which minister about holy things * live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

§ 497. *The provision for the ministry.*

This is St. Paul's answer to them that examined him, to them that called in question his conduct and motives, nay his very title to be called an apostle. And these were the false teachers, before alluded to, who no doubt were mortified to find that the apostle, when at Corinth, had maintained himself; and who artfully took occasion, from his working, to call in question his office and authority. He therefore here reminds the Corinthians, that they, having been themselves converted chiefly by his ministry, were a sufficient seal or proof of his apostleship. He declares that he had as much right as any one of the apostles, to be maintained at the expense of the church. He had as good claim as any other, not only to be himself supported, but to take with him also "a sister, a wife," a Christian spouse; in which he had the example of "other apostles," and "the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas." He had as much right as they, to forbear working, he and his companion Barnabas; in order to devote his time entirely to the work of the ministry. And if he had not urged this claim, this was not for want of right, as they vainly imagined, but only in order to prove his greater zeal, and to win so much the greater glory, in the Gospel.

And this power he further proves by referring to the practice of mankind, who are accustomed to pay those who work in their behalf, whether as soldiers or husbandmen, or in any other kind of employment. He proves it also by the sentence of the Law, that oxen used for treading out the corn might not be muzzled. See Deut. 25. 4. And if, he adds, "if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" If they that labour to supply your earthly wants are entitled to support, are not they much more entitled who watch for your spiritual welfare? And was not this the case amongst the Jews, and amongst the heathen also at their temples, that they which ministered were supported by those for whom they ministered? "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." This then is the will of Christ. This is the provision which He has made for the maintenance of his ministers for ever. Christians are to be glad to maintain them. Christians are to consider their maintenance as a part of the duty they owe to Christ; to be supplied not grudgingly or of necessity, but out of love to their Lord and Saviour. And thankful they should be to think, that the earth, though cursed for the sin of man, yet yields through God's blessing so large abundance, as that many can be spared from labouring for the sustenance of life; and that of these no small number may devote themselves to the sacred calling of the ministry.

But it is one thing for ministers to be thus provided for. It is another for them to use their provision aright, to exercise their power with self denial and moderation. Much need have all, both ministers and flock, to learn herein a lesson from St. Paul; who, apostle as he was, would not use his power, but was willing to suffer all things, rather than in any to "hinder the gospel of Christ." Let us then look to his example in whatever rights we possess. Let us be slow to assert them in the face of those who question them. Let us be ready to suffer want, reproach, and wrong, the scorn of strangers, and the loss of friends, rather than by the exercise of worldly wisdom, or by the application of worldly force, hinder the growth of faith and love, in the hearts of those who watch our conduct. How much do we owe to those who, in times long past, have made such provision for the ministers of our church, that what the people have to pay is for the most part only rendering them their own! How ready should the people be to give them this and more! How thankful should they be themselves for what they have; how watchful to preserve it for them that come after; and how willing, like St. Paul, whilst they defend the rights of others, to forbear insisting on their own!

The apostle had not used his power.

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

22 To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

§ 498. *How we ought to run our Christian race.*

Here we see that there are two ways of doing that which is our duty. And here we see how great is the difference between doing it unwillingly or willingly. St. Paul refrained from using his power to live at the expense of the church. And this he did out of his love for the souls of men, rather than risk giving any one offence. And in doing this it was his joy to think of the gain which might hence accrue unto the Gospel. Hence he did it willingly. He was glad to do it. He was glad to labour with his hands, and to earn his own subsistence, that he might have for his reward the more success as a preacher of the truth. Had he preached against his own will, yet preach he must; for a dispensation of the Gospel was committed to him; he was commissioned from on high in so solemn a manner, that he could not help it. But in that case he would have been content to preach it "in season" only. As it was, he preached it also "out of season." In that case he would have insisted on his right to be supported, without considering how much scandal his so doing might occasion. As it was, he "used none of these things." In that case he would have enjoyed the liberty he possessed, as one who was "free from all men;" a Jew, and therefore in bondage unto no man; see John 8. 33; a Roman, and therefore one of the masters of the world. As it was, he made himself the servant, or literally the slave of all; being to the Jews a Jew, and among the Gentiles living as a Gentile, to the weak behaving as though he had himself like scruples, that he might by all means save some.

In which way then are we doing whatever duty we have to do; unwillingly, 'grudgingly, and of necessity; or willingly, and cheerfully, and freely, unto the Lord? Do we, or do we not, relinquish our own liberty, recede from our own rank or right, suppress our own wishes and opinions, and refrain from our own otherwise allowable enjoyments, for the sake of serving our Saviour Christ? Do we not, or do we, creep as near to sin as we think we safely can, and fall as far short of holiness as we suppose that we decently may? Do we ask always, which way shall I most please God? Or oftentimes is our question more like to this: how may I most please myself without very much offending Him? Do we consider in every thing that we do, how may I most edify my brethren, how most glorify God by promoting their salvation: or do we even in regard to heaven think only of ourselves, and care little for what becomes of others, so we may ourselves escape the wrath to come?

Oh that we would weigh well how great is the prize set before us, and then we should not stay to ask how we may strive the least, but we should press forward to contend with one another, in the only safe point of rivalry, how we might love the most. Then we should deny ourselves not only all pleasure which leads to sin, but all ease which does not help to holiness. Then we should run not like them that race on earth, where one only, and which they know not, can obtain the prize, but with a full assurance that the crown of glory is ours, and ours for ever. Nothing we should think too much to sacrifice to Christ, nothing too much to yield unto each other, provided we abide still "under the law to Christ," provided we yield nothing against Christ's will. Nothing we should think too hard to impose upon ourselves, no mortifying of the flesh, no humbling of the spirit, provided it might help to prevent the risk of our being rejected of the Lord. Our duty we should then look on as our privilege; our service as perfect freedom. Our tribulation we should count for joy; and our death itself for victory.

The case of the Jews an ensample to us.

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that \parallel followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were ^{*}our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, ¹ The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them

committed, and ² fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and ³ were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and ⁴ were destroyed of the destroyer.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for \dagger ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but \dagger such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

\parallel Or, *went with them.*

^{*} Gr. *our figures.*

⁴ Numb. 14. 37.

¹ Ex. 32. 6. Ps. 106. 14.

\dagger Or, *types.*

² Numb. 25. 9.

\dagger Or, *moderate.*

³ Numb. 21. 6.

§ 499. *What security we have of God.*

For St. Paul to have any serious apprehension that he could possibly become "a castaway," ch. 9. 27, might seem almost incredible to those whom he addressed. He therefore reminds his Jewish readers, that their fathers, though made partakers of very eminent privileges, had been guilty of very signal sins. They were all under the cloud, even guided thereby from heaven in their journey through the wilderness. "And all passed through the sea," by which marvellous deliverance, as well as by the guidance of a cloud, they were all baptized unto Moses, dedicated as by sprinkling or dipping, to the obedience of the Law. They did all eat and drink of the same spiritual food, even of bread from heaven, and of water from the rock, which signified unto those who fed in faith, the strengthening of their souls by their Redeemer. And yet "with many of them God was not well pleased." They were idolaters, they committed fornication, they tempted God, they murmured. And therefore "they were overthrown in the wilderness." Now in all these things they were ensamples for the warning of their children, and they should serve also for a warning unto us, that he who "thinketh he standeth," should "take heed lest he fall."

This is the lesson which St. Paul here enforces, applying it in the case of idolatry, speaking to the Corinthians as unto wise men, who had the privilege of knowing that an idol is nothing, but who notwithstanding that privilege might incur the guilt of idolatry, if like the Israelites they "sat down to eat and drink," at the feasts of idols. This lesson St. Paul had taken to himself, in expressing his own liability to be a castaway. This lesson we may learn not only from the history of the Israelites in the wilderness, but from the many other sad accounts in the Old Testament, of men who in their generation preached to others, and fell very grievously themselves. Who then, we shall perhaps ask, who then can be saved, if patriarchs and apostles were not safe? We reply, that the possession of privileges gives no assurance of safety. We answer, that what with men is impossible, is possible with God. We answer, that no temptation befalls us beyond that which with God's help we might overcome. We answer, that God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. He will enable us to choose the way of escape which He has made. He will help us to walk in it securely. He will give us here as much sense of security as is consistent with our real safety. He will give us hereafter an entrance unto that state in which there is neither danger nor sin. "God is faithful." It is according to his character of fatherly regard for us, that thus He should do. "God is faithful." It is according to his word, here spoken by the apostle, in his name, that thus He will.

But in reply to these assurances, and in excuse for the hard heart of unbelief, or for the hardened resolution of continuing in sin, how many are there who perversely plead: This may be true in other cases, but not in mine; my passions are too strong, my opportunities too enticing; or my apprehension of God's mercy in the Gospel is too dull, for me to lead this life of faith, to run this race, to fight this fight, still conquering still to conquer sin, and still liable to be conquered as long as life shall last. Either I must be secured from risk of falling ever; or I despair of ever conquering. But no; observe, mistaken saint, or self deluding sinner, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Your case is not singular as you suppose. Your sin is not more justifiable, than that of other men; nor must you expect other terms than they. You must take heed lest you fall. No privileges on earth can exempt you from this risk. "God is faithful." No power in heaven can do more for you than this, He "will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Against partaking of idol sacrifices.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

17 For we *being* many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

20 But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*.

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

26 For ¹the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

27 If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for ²the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience?

30 For if I by *||* grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the *†* Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

33 Even as I please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

¹ Deut. 32. 17. Ps. 106. 37.

² Deut. 10. 14. Ps. 24. 1.

³ Deut. 10. 11. Ps. 24. 1.

|| Or, thanksgiving.

† Gr. Greeks.

§ 500. *That we must do all for the glory of God.*

From the consideration of our liability to fall, and of the help which God gives us towards standing, St. Paul urges on the Corinthians the important duty, that they should "flee from idolatry." Ver. 14. And in this counsel he refers to the many occasions with which they were beset, of eating things that had been offered to idols, and of eating at the feasts which commonly took place on idol sacrifices. These entertainments he compares to the Lord's supper, that feast of which Christians ate over the sacrifice of the death of Christ. And as in this case the "partakers of that one bread" are one body in Christ, so a public partaking of the idol sacrifices would make a Christian a partaker with the devils, to whom these things were sacrificed. For thus the Jews also were counted to be partakers together with Jehovah, of the sacrifices eaten at the altar. And how could we one while drink the cup of the Lord, and another while the cup of devils? How could we be partakers of the Lord's table, and also of the table of devils? Would not this be to tempt Christ, to provoke the Lord to jealousy, and to set up for being stronger than He, so that we fear not his displeasure? Would it not also be a scandal to our brethren, and ought we not to seek their wellbeing as anxiously as our own? And do not even things that are lawful to ourselves become thus not expedient for us to do? And yet the apostle would not have men scrupulous. The Christians at Corinth might buy what was sold in the markets, without asking any questions as to whether it had been offered to idols or not. "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." All sorts of food considered as God's works might lawfully be eaten. For the same reason they might eat of what was offered them at the tables of the heathen without asking any "question for conscience sake." But if it were pointed out to them that the meat had been offered to an idol, then, though they might know that an idol is nothing, they were to refrain from eating, out of regard to the beholder. "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and He would find other means to feed them, if they denied themselves in this. "Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." Not thy own misgiving, for thou hast none, but thy brother's scruple, this it is which ought to make it a matter of conscience to thee also. For though thy liberty stands clear of his convictions, thy conscience must not allow thee to do violence to his. And though he would do wrong to speak ill of thee for eating, thou wouldest do wrong in eating what he thinks it ill for thee to eat.

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Giving none offence." These are rules which we may apply to a great variety of cases in our own daily conduct. And this is the way in which we must endeavour to apply whatsoever is said in Scripture, about cases of conduct which now no longer occur. We must note the general principle, the motive suggested, the temper recommended, the end and object that are set forth. "The glory of God;" this is the object of all objects, the end of all ends. It is for this that we must be careful to give offence to no one. For this we must desire to "please all men," "that they may be saved," and so God may be glorified. Nay, for this we ought to desire even our own salvation; not only for our own pleasure, not chiefly that we ourselves may be for ever happy, but, above all, for God's glory's sake, in order that He who has so greatly loved us, may not have manifested his love in vain.

Women in the congregation must have the head covered.

1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the || ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but

the woman is the glory of the man.

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

10 For this cause ought the woman to have * power on her head, because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a † covering.

|| Or, traditions.

* That is a covering, in sign that she is under the power of her husband.

† Or, veil.

§ 501. *How far we ought to defer to custom.*

St. Paul had described his own practice in things indifferent, as a guide to the Corinthians in their conduct. And here he tells them to be followers of him, even as he also was of Christ. This is our sufficient warrant, for referring so often as we do, to the conduct of a man like unto ourselves, as a pattern for our own. And this must be our limit in following him, even so far as in him we may discern that he was a follower of our Lord. Here we see how he refers to Christ for the ground of his directions in a matter wherein the Corinthians had been in error. "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." What follows? that the man, having the precedency of the woman, in point of membership with Christ, must be distinguished in the Christian congregation by some fitting token of his superior rank. And yet the man must not presume on this preference, so as to forget that he is dependant on the woman, as well as the woman on the man; according to the wise ordinance of God, who would have each be a helper to the other, towards happiness on earth and in heaven.

How then may this precedency of the man be signified? This depends in some measure on the different customs, which prevail amongst different people. And generally, for the head to be covered, for the countenance to be in some sort veiled, may be considered as a token in the woman of her subjection to the authority of the man. And therefore even those women who in the age of miracles were inspired to pray or prophesy, might not do so with the head uncovered. And even nature has pointed out this rule of propriety, in that the one sex is usually provided with longer hair than the other. "For her hair is given her for a covering." And a covering implies shame. And shame implies weakness and dependency. And this being the case, a man "ought not to cover his head;" in order that by this difference between himself and a woman, in the congregation, he may signify that he is the image and glory of God. Whereas the woman ought "to have power on her head," a veil, in token of her being subject to the power of the man, because of her being subject; because of the man's presence; "because of the angels," those ministering spirits, who as a cloud of witnesses encompass us about, delighting in our orderly subjection to each other; and above all, because of God, because He has so ordained, because it is here so written in his word.

Let us then count nothing for a trifle, about which God has thought fit to give us rules in Scripture. Let us count nothing for a trifle, in which we may be able to prove our obedience to his will. Let us not think it enough to answer, that we cannot see the harm, that what seems wrong to some seems right to others, and that the customs of place or time cannot be the measure of what is right for ever. For here we see that we may be bound to defer to custom, even in what seems to be a matter of indifference. There may be reasons for the custom which we know not of. Or if there be none, yet in violating the custom, we might be guilty of arrogance towards man, or of impiety to God. To omit a customary token of respect is omitting to be respectful. To be uncovered, when the being so would signify precedency, is no less than forwardness and pride, in one that ought to take the lowest place. Let us then conform to the ways of those amongst whom we live, as far as we may consistently with doing God's will. Or rather let us do so, as doing his will, as loving Him, and loving to do all his pleasure.

The Corinthians came together for the worse.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have
110 such custom, neither the churches of God.

17 Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be || divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also * heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest

among you.

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, † *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper.

21 For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame † them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

* || Or, *schisms*.

* Or, *sects*.

† Or, *ye cannot eat*.

† Or, *them that are poor?*

§ 502. *Improvement arising from the sins of the churches.*

In concluding his directions for women to have their heads covered in the Christian congregation, St. Paul remarks, in reference to those who taught otherwise, "if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." And though before, he had praised them as remembering him in all things, see ver. 2, he now adds, "in this I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you." So that not only were there contentions as to how they should behave when there, but even there, even in the assembly of the congregation, there were divisions, separations of party from party, each stoutly maintaining their own opinion, each opposing the proceedings of the others. Neither persecution awaiting them without, nor the gift of miracles within, neither the authority of apostles still alive, the remembrance of Christ so lately ascended into heaven, nor the expectation of his so soon returning to judge the world, none of these things could secure to these primitive converts the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Can we wonder then that there are contentions, divisions, and heresies amongst ourselves; when the apostle could so easily believe, at least in part, what he heard of these Corinthian disturbances?

And see to what lengths they carried their selfishness and pride, those vigorous roots of all contention, even in partaking of the most solemn of all ordinances. When they came together to eat the Lord's supper it was customary to eat a meal in common. And to this meal each person contributed his share, which might be more or less according to the wealth of the contributor, but which when once contributed belonged to all alike. But at these feasts of love it appears that each used to take before the rest his own supper; that is to say, each of those who brought abundance. So that instead of the rich supplying food for the poor, and there being enough for all, they only who brought much had plenty, and they who brought little were in want; "one is hungry, and another drunken," one had nothing to eat, while another had even more than enough. What a mockery of the poor were these practices of the rich! What a profanation of the Lord's table! What an abuse of that interesting practice of antiquity, so conformable to the pattern of our Lord's own last supper, for the whole congregation to partake together of one simple and social meal! Can we wonder that the most solemn seasons, the most profitable ordinances, and the most valuable helps towards holiness and heaven, are now oftentimes profaned, slighted, or disused, when we see the Corinthians in the lifetime of St. Paul thus sensual and selfish at the table of the Lord? Well might St. Paul tell them that to eat the Lord's supper was not their object in coming together into one place! Well might he ask them whether they could not satisfy their hunger and thirst at home, instead of coming to fill their appetites at the house of God, to the mortification of those who had no such abundance! Well did they deserve to receive from him far more severe reproofs than those words of gentle admonition, "I praise you not." Oh shameful excesses! Oh scandalous divisions, for Christians to be guilty of, so nigh unto the manifestation of Christ upon the earth! Oh wondrous mercy of Almighty God, that contrived, out of the occurrence of these evils, and also from their occurring at that early period, to derive instruction and advantage for all ages of the church! The use to which He has put heresies is this, "that they which are approved may be made manifest." Sobriety of mind, humility, love, subjection to each other, and devout submission to all the ordinances of Christ, these are graces which are so much the more easily discerned, by contrast with that arrogance and conceit, that oppressive and exclusive temper, which engenders dissensions in religion. And whether it be for these, or for greediness in their love feasts, that the apostle is reproofing the Corinthians; may not we be thankful, if the sins must sometime be committed, that they were committed whilst yet there was an apostle living, whose reproofs might be as salutary to us as to them, whose words might not only correct their faults, but serve to guard us from their fall for ever?

St. Paul's account of the Lord's supper.

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread :

24 ¹ And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do || in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, * ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him

eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh † damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home ; that ye come not together unto ‡ condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

¹ Matt. 26. 26. Mark 14. 22. Luke 22. 19.

|| Or, for a remembrance.

* Or, shew ye.

† Or, judgment.

‡ Or, judgment.

§ 503. *That we must prepare, and also communicate.*

We have here one more account of the Lord's supper, distinct from all that have been related in the Gospels, having been received, as St. Paul tells us, "of the Lord," directly revealed by Him for the guidance of this apostle in his duties, and for the further information of the church. "The same night in which he was betrayed;" this is the first point here pressed on our attention. Who would not wish to bear it well in mind, when he receives those holy mysteries? Who would not wish to give it all its weight, when he decides on the duty of receiving? Let us but think of what our Lord submitted to, that night, and we shall delight to do herein his will. Let us but remember how it was his own familiar friend that did him this dishonour, and we shall abhor the thought of like treason in ourselves. And here we are told in what case we are guilty of betraying Him, even guilty of our Lord's body and blood. It is when we eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily; when we discern not the Lord's body; when we partake without fitting thoughts of his great love in dying for us, without reverent apprehension of his gracious presence, as pledged to us in these consecrated symbols of his love. And is it not also, when through want of such due regard for his great goodness in dying for us on the cross, we care not to partake at all?

Whilst our hearts are thus unmoved by the tidings of God's mercy in the atonement of the death of Christ, whether we eat and drink without regarding them, or refuse to eat and drink for want of due regard to them, in either case we expose ourselves to the just judgments of that God, on whose forbearance we presume, and whose goodness we set at nought. Amongst ourselves the more frequent form of sin is to neglect the ordinance altogether. Among the Corinthians the abuse of it was prevalent. And it was to their selfish and sensual behaviour, to their eating to satisfy their hunger, and not even tarrying for one another, when they met to eat the supper of the Lord, that St. Paul directed these fearful censures. Many, he tells them, for this cause were weak and sickly, and many slept. The judgments of the Lord had been manifested by the preternatural sickness, and premature deaths, of many who thus profaned his ordinance. If He suffer us, in our abuse or neglect of it, still to live on in health and strength, let us remember that his arm is not shortened; his condemnation is sure; and unless we repent, it will be for ever.

Two things are here very plainly commanded unto us all, in respect to the Lord's supper; to examine ourselves thoroughly, before we come, and having so examined to good purpose, then to come. "Let a man examine himself," is our first duty. Let us judge ourselves, if we would not be judged. Let us search well into our hearts. Are we "in the faith?" 2 Cor. 13. 5. Are we trusting for mercy, peace, and joy, only in the merits of our Saviour? Do we trust in his merits? Do we look for his salvation? Do we feel our hearts affected by the remembrance of his love? Do we find our lives conformed to his image, and quickened by the influence of the Holy Spirit of God? Let us examine ourselves on all such points as these. Let us seek for such conversion unto God. Let us seek for it till we find it. Let us seek for it by prayer, that we may be *sure* of finding it. "And so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." When we have thus examined, we are then bound to receive. We are prepared, but not worthy, for this we can never be. We are prepared to receive worthily, suitably to the ordinance, agreeably to the love herein set forth, the love of Him who died for the unworthy.

Oh that we may never refuse to prepare! Oh that we may never refuse to come! Oh that we may profit by any chastening which we here receive of God, so as to be turned unto the Lord with all our hearts, and to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and not to be "condemned with the world!"

The manifestation of the Spirit.

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

3 Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus *accursed*: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the

|| *Or, anathema.*

same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or * Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

* *Gr. Greeks.*

§ 504. *Of the gifts of grace.*

It is well that we should try to understand these matters, of which St. Paul would not have the Corinthians ignorant. But here we shall find somewhat more of difficulty than usual, because the things of which he treats now no longer happen, because we have now no experience of the chief gifts here mentioned. Yet we shall derive from these instructions no less of profit to ourselves, in our own very different situation, if we watch for those principles of universal interest, which pervade these apostolic counsels, and for the sake of which no doubt it has been wisely ordered, that what would have else concerned the Corinthians only for a time, has been preserved in the church for ever. How wonderfully has God contrived it that the diverse and complicated cases of human conduct should be opened by the same simple keys of faith and love! How powerfully would He stir up our diligence in the study of his will, by revealing it in connexion with the history, the customs, the privileges, or the sins, of nations long since extinct! How amply does He reward our labour by providing, in what was written for their instruction, that which makes us also wise unto salvation! How greatly would He enlarge our charity by thus shewing us that as we are made of the same flesh with all other nations of the earth, so we have the like temptations to encounter, must stand by the same grace, and must be saved, if at all, by the merits of the same Redeemer, Jesus Christ!

Know we not that we were Gentiles, like unto the Corinthians, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as we were led? Know we not that this was the situation of our fathers according to the flesh? And are we not aware that to God we owe it, and to their faith under God's goodness, that we have inherited the blessing, even been brought into covenant with God, and taught to say that Jesus is the Lord? Have we not through these means the gifts of the Holy Ghost, his manifold gifts of Christian grace, though not of miraculous operation? Are we not bound in respect of these which we enjoy, to acknowledge that it is "the same Spirit," "the same Lord," "the same God which worketh all in all?" And is it not also amongst us most certain that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal;" not merely for his own advantage, but for the edification of the rest? This was true of "the word of wisdom," and of "the word of knowledge," two different kinds or degrees of inspiration, bestowed on the first teachers of the Gospel. This was true of faith, the kind of faith they had, through which, though it were but in strength as a grain of mustard seed, they were able to remove mountains. See Matt. 17. 20. This was true of the gifts of healing, and of other like miracles, of prophecy, whether foretelling the future or revealing the present will of God, of discerning the spiritual gifts of each other, of speaking or interpreting strange languages. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit." All these, and not these only, but truth and justice, humility and meekness, soberness and purity, and peace and joy, all does the Holy Spirit work in man, and all not for man's present glorying, but for the everlasting benefit of man's self and of his brethren. God grant that we may profit by the grace which He imparts; not being puffed up with our privileges, not using them for our advancement in the esteem of men, but for the spiritual advantage of our brethren, and for securing our acceptance through Christ!

And especially let us not murmur against his goodness, if He give us not, as soon as we expect it, that grace which we most earnestly desire. Let us not be jealous of each other, if we feel ourselves outrun in that heavenly race, wherein though some are afore the other, all may obtain the prize. The Spirit divides "to every man severally as he will." "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." "We have been all made to drink," if we are partakers of the blood of Christ, "we have been all made to drink of one Spirit!" Oh let us then, as members of one body, rejoice in the prosperity of the other members. Let us feel that their proficiency is our gain, promoting as it does, that which should be the first desire of our hearts, the honour of our Lord.

That we are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

20 But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we || bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more

|| Or, put on.

▪ Or, division.

abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25 That there should be no *schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, † diversities of tongues.

29 *Are* all apostles? *are* all prophets? *are* all teachers? *are* all ‡ workers of miracles?

30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

† Or, kinds.

‡ Or, powers.

§ 505. *That there should be no schism in the body.*

The possession of spiritual gifts seems to have given rise amongst the Corinthians to pride and jealousy. St. Paul would teach them to regard these marvellous powers as means of edifying others, not of exalting themselves. And he would insist upon the necessity of each man being content with whatever gift it might please the Spirit to bestow upon himself. All could not be apostles, nor all prophets. All could not be endowed with the same office in the church, or with the same gift of the Spirit. Each must be aware that only some could possess the most eminent station. Each ought to covet, not that which would confer most distinction for the present, but that which would be in the end most excellent. And therefore whilst the apostle urges them to covet the best of these miraculous powers, he tells them that he would shew them a way better still, even the grace of charity in the heart.

See then how powerful is the argument for love, which arises from regarding ourselves as "many members, yet one body," that body "the body of Christ!" Know we not how impossible it is that any one member should possess the place of the rest? Know we not that it is God who has formed, and proportioned, and arranged, the several members of the body in such manner as seemed good unto Himself? Know we not that each member is assisted by the rest, nay, without the help of the rest is put to great distress, if not itself made useless? Know we not that there is no member so feeble but that God has fitted it for some necessary use, and that those which we count least honourable both receive from ourselves "more abundant honour," more watchful care for decent covering, and have also had "more abundant honour" given to them, more curious contrivance displayed in their formation, by Him who "hath tempered the body together?" How great is the proof which we thus ever carry about within ourselves, of the greatness of God's power, and wisdom, and love! How plainly might we see, in this tempering of our bodies, a likeness of that harmony and communion, which should bind together, as in one body, the members of Christ! Each is dependent on the rest for help. No one is so powerful, as that it can fail to suffer by the loss of any other. No one is so feeble, as not to be of use to all the rest. And those "which we think to be less honourable," the poor, the ignorant, the wicked, on these God would have us bestow our chiefest pains, to these, by his own merciful direction, to these is the Gospel preached. How can we then bear to be at variance with each other? How can any one class in the Christian community oppress or revile any other? How could it, if the community were really Christians? If our hearts were really warmed by love, if we really felt ourselves to be as dear to each other as members of one body, how could we bear the thought of separation; how not take all pains beforehand to prevent it, and afterwards to heal the wound?

And above all, when we remember that we are "the body of Christ," that He is the head, that his is the power which should controul all our movements, and supply vigour, and activity, and life, oh how can we so lightly raise, so heedlessly aggravate, and perpetuate, what we call religious dissensions? In the Christian body, above all others, "there should be no schism." Of Christians there should be but one body, one heart, one mind, one soul. Oh that we had all thus the same care one for another! Oh that we all thus suffered in the sufferings, and rejoiced in the honours of each other!

That no gifts without charity profit.

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity *||* vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth * in the truth;

|| Or, is not rash.

* Or, with the truth.

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophecy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I *†* thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, *‡* darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

† Or, reasoned.

‡ Gr. in a riddle

§ 506. *The excellency and durability of love.*

Graces are better than gifts. Grace is of all gifts the best. Of all ways, the most excellent is charity. This is that, which the Corinthians would have done best of all to covet. This is that, without which in vain they spake with tongues, in vain they had the gift of prophecy, the understanding of "all mysteries, and all knowledge;" in vain all faith in their miraculous endowments. Their tongues were but empty sound; their knowledge and their faith but useless speculation. Nay, though for man's sake we should give away all our goods, or for God's name's sake yield up our bodies to be burned, yet unless these acts of bounty or devotion come of love within the heart, of love for man, and love for God, of love for man our brother, out of love towards God our Saviour, they profit us nothing. And hence let us learn that this is true in other matters, that no one duty can be really done as it ought to be, whilst any other is wilfully neglected. Truth profits us nothing, if though true in speech we are impure in heart. Purity profits us nothing, if whilst we mortify the flesh we are proud in spirit. Neither have we any advantage of kindness towards man, if it flow not from love for God, nor any benefit in devotion towards our God, if it be not cherished out of our thankful sense of his inestimable love, in the redemption of mankind through Christ.

This is the very charity which is here described; not what we now commonly mean by that misused name, the mere gift of alms, or a favourable opinion of each other's conduct, but a lively affection for each other founded on a devout love towards God. To be longsuffering, and kind; not to envy, not to vaunt ourselves, not to be puffed up; to behave ourselves suitably to our respective conditions, and according to our character as sinners saved; to seek the good of others with more ardour than our own; to be neither irritable in our temper, nor censorious in our thoughts; to be not glad to sin if we thought we might, but grieved to think how much of suffering sin cost to Him, who did none Himself; to derive our chief of joy from the truth of his blessed Gospel; to bear with and veil the offences of others, whilst we confess and abhor our own; to believe and hope all things in their favour, and patiently to endure all the evil we ever meet *¶* at their hands; these are the particulars here set down of charity; these are enough to satisfy us that it can mean no less than universal love. Oh who can venture, with such an account of it as this before us, who dare set up for being charitable, by dint of giving never so ample alms, with a heart that rejoices in the sin of others, and is puffed up with supposed righteousness of its own? Oh who can suppose that the profession of belief can avail unto the saving of the soul, without love felt and exercised; when the very apostle who has been thought most to magnify the efficacy of faith, here comparing it and hope with charity, has pronounced, that the greater of these is charity?

It is greater; for it includes them both. It "believeth all things, hopeth all things." It is greater, for it "never faileth." When prophecies of the future shall have been all fulfilled, when revelation of that which is seen face to face shall be no longer needed for the present, when what we now believe in shall be known, and what we now know in part shall be perfectly understood, when what we now hope for shall have taken place, even then shall love still abide, to form hereafter the substance of those joys of which it now gives us the best earnest. What can be said more of any grace unto which we can now attain, than that it will never fail? What can more engage us in its behalf, to pray, to strive, to study, to practise? As yet we are but children, compared with what we shall be. As yet we see but darkly, compared with how we shall see. But when we shall see face to face in heaven, when there we shall have put away childish things, even then charity will abide, even there we still shall love.

The gift of tongues and that of prophecy compared.

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

2 For he ^{*}that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man ^{*}understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether

pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the || sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 ~~For~~ if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words † easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous † of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret.

* Gr. *heareth*.

|| Or, *tunes*.

† Gr. *signification*.

† Gr. *spirit*.

§ 507. *We ought to prefer that which is most edifying.*

No miraculous endowment was more likely to be admired in the possessor, than the power of speaking in a tongue unknown before. We are all aware how long it takes to learn a strange language. We can all feel how much we should be surprised, to find any one able to master all this difficulty at once. Can we wonder that they, who had this ability bestowed on them, were apt to be elated at the gift? Can we wonder that this gift was more coveted than others, in proportion as it most commanded attention and respect? Do we not still oftentimes observe, nay, do we not often feel in our hearts, that whatsoever gains most esteem of men, is thought therefore the most valuable possession? But ought we not to value rather that which does God most honour, and does most good unto our brethren? Is not charity "a more excellent way," ch. 12. 31, than any miraculous operation? And of all such gifts is not that the most excellent which most tends to edification? And is not this also true of all our natural endowments, acquired accomplishments, or graces given us by the Holy Spirit of God, that those are most worthy of our regard which are most fit to edify the church, not those which might best help to exalt ourselves?

This is the chief lesson we have to learn from the comparison here drawn between speaking with tongues and prophesying. For prophesying means inspired preaching. It means that ability to speak the truth of God without risk of error, which was enjoyed by the apostles, and by other chosen servants of the Lord. This then helped to instruct and comfort those who heard. Whereas to speak in a strange tongue was nigh to useless, except amongst those to whom it was familiar. And this was the chief object of the gift of tongues, that the preachers of the Gospel might be able to make themselves understood amongst all the nations of the world. How little did they consider the real value of the gift, if they preferred to exercise it amongst those to whom the tongues were strange! To how little profit could it have been thus to speak "unto God" only, thus to edify only themselves! This was to be as a harp or pipe untuned, in which the best ears can find no melody; or as a trumpet incorrectly played, which would perplex the hearers, instead of giving them their signal. This would make the speaker and the hearers no better than foreigners to each other; however correctly the language might be spoken, and however well understood in its proper country.

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret." It seems then that usually they who had these gifts could use them at discretion. It seems that these, like all other blessings, were given in answer to prayer. It seems that sometimes they who spake with tongues, might exercise their gift amongst those to whom the tongues were strange, by way of manifesting the great power of God, whilst others had the gift of interpreting to the rest. It seems that they who thought fit, or were overruled, to speak with tongues, were bound to covet the ability of interpreting what they said. Let us also remember, whatever privileges we have received at the hand of God, that it is left to our discretion to use them for the best. Let us pray that we may both enjoy his bounty largely, and also use it rightly. And, above all, let us endeavour to use every gift we have in such manner, as may at once most manifest God's glory, and most help in edifying God's church.

The gift of tongues and that of prophecy further compared.

14 For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.

20 Brethren, be not children in understanding:

* Gr. perfect, or, of a ripe age.

howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be * men.

21 In the law it is written, With *men* of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or *one* unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

1 Is. 28. 11.

§ 508. *The excellency of Christian preaching.*

The comparison between the gift of tongues and that of prophecy is here further carried on. And it is further made evident, how wrong it was to prefer the gift which most admitted of display, or to use it for the mere purpose of displaying it. Thus he which prayed in a strange tongue might pray in his own spirit, might bless in his own spirit, but his meaning was unfruitful to the hearers. Those to whom the tongue was strange could not join in his prayer or praise. He might give thanks well, and yet the rest not be edified. And therefore St. Paul, though he had the gift of many tongues, had "rather speak five words" so as to be understood, so as to have his meaning likely to edify the hearers, "than ten thousand words" in such a manner, as probably would chiefly lead them to admire himself. And he reminds the Corinthians, that though it was needful in point of wickedness to be as children, who are incapable of most actual sins, yet in understanding it was well to be as men, not as infants who know not what is said or meant.

Hence we may derive for ourselves useful rules for the conduct of our public worship. We may see plainly how great would be our error, if we were to have prayers and praises offered up by our ministers in a tongue not comprehended by the people. And as this is one of the many points which justify, nay, render imperative, our refusal to hold any communion with the church once established in this realm, it is well to note what ground of Scripture we have here for continuing in a state of separation, which else might seem to make us guilty of the sin of schism. Is not this then most plainly here enjoined, that we should offer our public worship in such a language as that the unlearned may know when to "say Amen?" Is not the other method, of using a strange tongue, to impose wilfully on ourselves, for no profitable use, that which is spoken of "in the law" as a visitation of wrath, a last resource to move an unbelieving people?

And further, let us learn hence how desirable it is, that in the use of our own language, we should prefer that which is plain and simple, to that which is fine but not easily understood. Most thankful we ought to feel that this method has been followed in the prayers provided for us by the church. Most carefully we ought to watch that we promote no other method in the exhortations, which the people in some sort provide for themselves. The people have some influence with their ministers in directing the tone of public preaching. That which is most generally preferred by the hearer is likely to be also chosen by the speaker. Each therefore, according to his place and ability, should endeavour to promote a taste for what is edifying to all. Preaching should be not like tongues spoken in confusion, of no profit to them that believe, and to the unbeliever only *matter of* scorn and scandal. But like prophesying, it should both edify the one and convince the other. It should be calculated to inflame the zeal of the devout, and awaken the consciences of them that know not God. It should make manifest the secrets of the heart. It should tell each man all the things that ever he has done; bringing home to his remembrance his past transgressions, in all the height of their iniquity; and telling him, when most he sees the sinfulness of sin, "Thou art the man." 2 Sam. 12. 7. Then should we fall down and worship God in earnest, when made to feel how good He is to usward, how much of evil He has borne with at our hands, how much of good He has graciously heaped upon our heads. Oh that our preachers may endeavour thus to preach! Oh that we may desire thus to hear! Oh that all who hear of us may report, and that we within ourselves may experience, that God is in us of a truth!

That God is not the God of confusion, but of peace.

26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

27 If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

30 If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For God is not the author of * confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the ¹ law.

35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

* Gr. *tumult*, or, *unquietness*.

¹ Gen. 3. 16.

§ 509. *All things in the church must be done in order.*

The chief rule we have learnt hitherto from these directions of St. Paul, for the exercise of spiritual gifts is, that we in all our public services should aim not at the magnifying of the few, but at the edifying of the many. We have here another most important principle set forth, that "all things be done decently and in order." And the reason must be well observed, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." See we not how exactly this is true in all his works of nature and of grace? See we not how in the universe, as a whole, and in every portion of the same, each part is fitly joined together, each has its own proper place and office, and each helps to the well being of the rest? The sun and moon and stars; the earth, with its seas and clouds, its mountains and its vales; the rocks, the plants, the living animals, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, the creeping things and four-footed beasts, almost innumerable to us, are all counted, and sorted, and preserved in order by Him who at the first made all. Each has its own rank, and post, and season. And all are kept in well being and profitable use, only by subordination of each to other, and of all to Him.

And is not the like true of the kingdom of heaven, of saints and angels in their several degrees, and of all the things which took place in the glorious revelation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Was it not at the time appointed from the foundation of the world that He was made man and dwelt amongst us? See Gal. 4. 4. Was it not in due season that Christ died for the ungodly? See Rom. 5. 6. Is it not by a righteous rule that God is reconciled through Christ to sinful man? Is it not by a perfect law of justice and of truth that Christ will Himself hereafter judge all mankind? Oh that man would not thus arrogantly resist his will, and disturb the settled peace of all the universe! Oh that man would not presume to be thus the author or abettor of confusion, by self sufficiency and pride, discension and rebellion! Oh that we would no longer be at enmity with God through sin, but would be at peace with Him through Christ!

It is however chiefly to our proceedings in the public congregation, that we must apply the reason and the rule here given, for peace and order. "Let all things be done to edifying." Let not each be eager to exercise his own gifts, with a view to exalt himself above his brethren. Let each submit to the appointed order of the church. This order allowed all who had miraculous gifts to use them in due turn. This order now prescribes to all who have due appointment, that they should minister in their several offices. And as for those who have no appointment to any office in the ministry, though they have no turn allowed them for speaking in the church, they are not less bound in private to exhort, instruct, console, and edify one another. And in all, the spirits of each are to be subject unto the rest. What is done in each single church, is to be the same as what is done "in all the churches of the saints." The Corinthians might not permit women to speak in theirs, as if they had a right to do herein differently from others; as if the word of God had come out from them, or had come unto them only. And the more we count ourselves to be spiritual, we must the more submit to the settled order of the church in all things consistent with the commandments of the Lord, even as though it were his commandment. And then how near should we be to such a church as God would have us, if we were all fashioned by one pattern, all governed by one rule; that rule his will, that pattern his example.

Lord, let not us be ignorant of thy ways! Or, if now ignorant, leave us not in ignorance for ever! Let us love the order in which Thou dost delight! Let us seek the peace which Thou lovest to impart!

The Gospel which St. Paul preached.

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye *||* keep in memory * what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain

unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of † one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

|| Or, hold fast.

** Gr. by what speech.*

† Or, an abortive.

§ 510. *The death and resurrection of Christ.*

St. Paul here declares to the Corinthians the Gospel which he had preached unto them. That is to say, he sends them, at the conclusion of his Epistle, a statement of what that Gospel is. For he had delivered unto them when first he saw them, that which he now repeats, that which had also been delivered to him, which he had received himself from Christ. And this Gospel is, "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." So it was that he had preached; and so had they believed. This then is the great good news which St. Paul proclaimed, this the faith wherein we stand; by which also we are saved, if we keep in memory what has been preached unto us, unless we have believed in vain. That Christ died, and that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He died at the time and for the purpose foretold, that at the end of the appointed years, Messiah was cut off for his people, see Dan. 9. 26, and that by his stripes we were healed; these form one chief part of the apostolic doctrine, these must form one chief portion of our faith. Let us see then that we give due heed to this most important fact. Let us see that we set foremost in our thoughts the death of Christ, as that by which alone we live. Let us look to it as the means whereby we have been reconciled unto God, delivered from the bondage of sin and death, and admitted to the inheritance of the saints in light.

The other great fact and doctrine here insisted on, as constituting the Gospel which St. Paul declared, is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "He was buried," and "he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." And this is confirmed by mention of several occasions on which He was seen alive after his resurrection. These were events well known, and universally acknowledged for facts, among the early Christians. And yet even as early as the time at which St. Paul was writing, he thought it needful to put the Corinthians in mind of them. For unless they kept in memory what had been preached unto them, their faith would be all in vain. How far then do we keep in memory the resurrection of our Lord? Do we remember it, so as to think of it, when the thought would help to check in us too great fondness for this present life, or when it would raise in us greater hope of glory in the life which is to come? When we are tempted to partake of the vanities of the world, or to indulge in fleshly lusts, do we consider how our Lord's rising from the dead proves that we shall in like manner rise also? Do we hold back the hand which fain would seize upon unlawful gains? Do we close the lips that long to utter wicked or idle words? Do we deny the appetite which craves for pleasurable excess, when it ought to be contented with sufficiency? If not, have we not lost sight of the resurrection of our Lord? Have we not forgotten that we must rise like Him? Have we not believed in vain, or not at all, that we are bound to rise already unto newness of life?

St. Paul adds his own testimony to the resurrection of Christ, speaking of himself as "the least of the apostles." For when he considered his own past conduct, he felt himself not fit to be at all called an apostle. Yet when he thought of God's grace, and what abundant labours it had enabled him to go through, he could not refrain from being a witness, and hoping that he might be an effectual witness, to the truth of that which his own eyes had seen. Lord, when we look in upon ourselves, we seem scarce meet to call upon thy name! When we consider our many negligences and offences, we can scarce count ourselves for Christians at all! But when we consider the riches of thy mercy, and the abundance of thy heavenly help, then we feel that we can do all things through Christ strengthening us; yet not we, but the grace of God that is in us!

The resurrection of the dead proved.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen :

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ : whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised :

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order : Christ the firstfruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father : when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed is death.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under *him*, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

§ 511. *Christ risen the first fruits of the dead.*

That Christ had risen from the dead was one chief point in the doctrine preached by St. Paul. And that which had been preached by the apostle was what the Corinthians were bound to keep in memory. And therefore he might well ask them, "if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Much it must be lamented, that owing to the many errors and divisions of Christians, for a thing to have been preached is no longer any evidence of its certainty. Much it is to be desired, that through God's blessing on our endeavours to promote unity and truth, neither the preaching of ministers, nor the hearing of the people, should any longer be often vain. Vain would both have been, the apostle argues, if Christ were not risen. For "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." So that all those who had testified to the resurrection of Christ must have been in that case guilty of bearing false witness, to the dishonour of God. Thus would their preaching have been vain, and worse than vain, even false, and profane, and blasphemous. And so also would the faith of the hearers have been vain. They would have been believing a lie. They would have been still in their sins.

What a frightful thought is this for such as trust that their sins have been forgiven, that they are reconciled to God, that they have access to Him as sons to a loving Father, that their life through his Holy Spirit is really made to be acceptable unto Him, and that their death is an entrance into his abode of joy! And how little of such trust can we have for ourselves, or for our friends which have fallen asleep in Christ, if we can bear to think without horror that all this might possibly be delusion ; if we should not be the most miserable of all men, were it by any means made to appear, that we have no hope in Christ, for those spiritual and eternal benefits, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," ch. 2, 9, which relate not to this life of sense, but to the other and new life which we begin to live on earth, and which we expect to enjoy in heaven for ever?

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Away then all false fears! Away all faint misgivings! "The Lord is risen indeed." Luke 24. 34. And his rising is a sure earnest of ours. He is "become the firstfruits of them that slept." He was the first who arose from death to life eternal. But He was first of many who shall hereafter follow. For as surely as the death of Adam entailed death on all mankind, so surely does it follow, from the resurrection of Christ, that all will be made alive; all "they that are Christ's, at his coming." Christ is the firstfruits; therefore in due order the whole harvest must follow. And this is to take place at the end of the world, before the end of that kingdom which the Son has received of the Father, to rule over his redeemed people. It will be when He shall have put down, and thoroughly subdued, every thing that exalteth itself against God, even all the pride of man, and all the malice of the devil. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." See then how surely sin must first be vanquished! See how mad it is in us to persevere in sin, when we thus know that of a certainty Christ shall prevail against us! See how all things are put under his feet; all things made subject unto the Son, that we may learn to submit to Him ourselves! See how "he is excepted, which did put all things under him," lest from the Son's reigning for a time we should suppose Him to be greater than the Father! See how even the Son Himself shall "be subject unto him that put all things under him," so as for us to know that the Father and the Son are one, and "that God may be all in all."

The resurrection of the dead further proved.

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

31 I protest by *your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

32 If || after the manner of men I have fought with

beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

* Some read, *our*.

|| Or, to speak *after the manner of men*.

§ 512. *The love of the world at variance with the hope of glory.*

The resurrection of the dead is here further proved from the testimony of the many converts to the faith, who had been baptized in expectation of this event; as well as from the sufferings which they had cheerfully undergone in support of their testimony. And those who were disposed to doubt it, are reminded, that such doubts arise from want of knowing God, and from disinclination to do his will. "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" What was it that induced so many to become converts to the Gospel, to renounce their vain gods, to sacrifice all their worldly joys, to be buried with Christ by baptism into death, see Rom. 6. 4, to yield up property, and liberty, and life? what, if it were not reliance on the promise of Christ, that after death they should have life eternal? what, if it were not faith in the testimony of those who had seen the Lord after his resurrection?

And that this their testimony was no idle tale, they proved by what they suffered in support of it. The thing was one in which they could not be deceived. Whether Jesus was or was not crucified; whether He was or was not truly dead; whether He did or did not rise again from the dead, and shew Himself unto them truly alive, by such signs as were infallible; these were matters of fact, not fancies or opinions; these were things of which their senses could be sufficiently assured, even as of their own existence. In these things then they could not be deceived. Neither in these things could they be deceivers. For see what was all they had to gain by deceiving. To stand "in jeopardy every hour," in jeopardy of imprisonment and death; to "die daily," to feel daily the pain of apprehending death, or pains equal to those of dying; to fight "with beasts," which, being spoken "after the manner of men," means, to be exposed to the reproaches of the insolent, to the blows of the cruel, to the persecution of the fierce and bloodthirsty. These things, and such as these, were all that could be gained by preaching the resurrection of the dead through Christ; these were all that could be gained, if there were indeed no resurrection. And who could be so mad as to encounter all this loss, for the sake of teaching what they knew to be a lie, for the sake of leading others to hope in a resurrection, in which they had no confidence themselves?

"Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die:" this would be of the two the more reasonable proceeding. This was a course of conduct more likely to be followed, by those who had no prospect of a life to come; to enjoy the present whilst they have it, to take all the pleasure they can get to day, lest they be overtaken by death to morrow. And this, the apostle hints, this was the thought which still prevailed in the minds of such as would not receive the testimony of the truth, they preferred to reckon of themselves as of the beasts which perish; they preferred to enjoy the pleasures of this life to the uttermost. The better principles and practices of the Corinthian converts were corrupted by communication with their unbelieving countrymen. They were asleep to righteousness. They were awake to sin. They had, some of them, not the knowledge of God. They needed to be put to shame by these words of the apostle. And what is it that now hinders our belief in the resurrection? Or how can we be counted to believe in it if we doubt that to die is gain? What but our sinfulness? What but our love for our sins? Either out of regard for this world's pleasures, we persuade ourselves that perhaps there is no other; or, owning that there is, we live as if there were none, and hence come to wish that there might be none. We fear that to us it will be a "resurrection of damnation." John 5. 29. We should be glad therefore to think that there were none at all. What is this but to be asleep in sin? What is this but to be ignorant of God? We must awake. All must know God. We must all awake; either now from sin to righteousness, or at the last trump from death to condemnation. All must know God; either now as their Father, Redeemer, Sanctifier, or hereafter as a consuming fire to all who refuse the salvation He proclaims.

How the dead are to be raised up, and with what body.

35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but *there is* one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

40 *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

41 *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is

sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

46 Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.

49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

§ 513. *That we shall be raised up in the likeness of Christ.*

We acknowledge that God was able to create. We see that He can preserve and multiply. We are familiar with the sight of seed sown and quickened in the ground, after it has first been severed from the living plant, and become to all appearance dead. How great then would be our folly, if we should refuse to believe the resurrection, merely because we cannot understand "how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come!" It matters not what we sow. It matters not how little we should expect beforehand that our seed could become a plant or tree. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." And so we might be sure God can do unto ourselves. God is able in the case of seeds and plants. God is able in the case of men, if He so think fit. He is able to give to every one of us a body after death. He is able to give to every one his own body. This may be sufficient answer to the question, "How are the dead raised up?" They are raised up by God. They are raised up by the power of Him who made the living, and much more can raise the dead; by the power of Him who made trees at the first, and much more can quicken seeds into plants; by the power of Him who at the first made man, and much more can make him live for ever.

But still we fain would know, "with what body do they come?" And the objector, who raises this inquiry, means to say, that they cannot surely come with such bodies as now they have on earth, or with the same as that with which they die. As if God could not make other bodies, infinite in variety; as if He had not made other bodies, innumerable to man, each fitted for its own place and purpose, each preserved, sustained, renewed by God. Men, and beasts, and fishes, and birds; what skill of contrivance, what fitness for their several uses, is manifest in the bodies of all these! The sun again, and moon, and stars, how different are these all from the rest, and from each other; how different at different seasons from themselves! "So also is the resurrection of the dead." So also is the body that is raised up, different from that which is buried; as different as the living plant from the lifeless seed; as different as the grown man from the infant, as different as the sun in all his strength from the pale and waning moon. We see how it is sown, "in corruption," "in dishonour," "in weakness." But we learn also from our daily experience, that there is nothing in this to hinder God from raising it, if He will, "in power," "in glory," "in incorruption." We see how it is sown "a natural body," that is to say, an animal body, a body that has been nourished by meats and drinks, has been subject to cold and nakedness, to pain, disease, and death. But we are assured that it is raised a spiritual body. We are assured by those Scriptures, which tell us of the first Adam, that he was made "a living soul;" Gen. 2. 7; and which also inform us of the second Adam, that whom He will He quickeneth. See John 5. 21. At first we are, like the first Adam, of the earth. Afterwards we are, like the second Adam, like "the Lord from heaven." Thus we know with what bodies the dead arise; the dead in Christ, with bodies like unto Christ's body. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy;" such are our infirmities whilst we continue upon earth. "And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly;" such is the glory which we expect in heaven. Now we bear "the image of the earthy." We hunger and thirst, we desire, we suffer, we die. But then we shall bear "the image of the heavenly;" we shall no more have want unsatisfied, we shall no more suffer, we shall die no more. God grant that we may thus be raised, by his great power and free grace, now from sin, and then from death; now to holiness, and then to heaven: through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The change that must take place at our resurrection.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immor-

tal, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 'O death, where *is* thy sting? O *||* grave, where *is* thy victory?

56 The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

57 But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Hos. 13. 14.

|| Or, *hell*.

§ 514. *The triumph over sin and death.*

Few things make the resurrection more hard to understand, than our own experience of flesh and blood, how liable it is to decay and to corruption. We see the strength of the body gradually fade away. We see it pant, yea gasp for breath. We see it struggle, and sink, and expire. We find that upon death it becomes loathsome to the sense. We bury it in the ground. And if after sufficient time the grave is disturbed, we find that by degrees it has all mouldered into dust, or has been consumed by the worms bred within its own corruption. And how then can this body live for ever? We mistake in supposing that it can. And the apostle, to guard us against this error, here assures us, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." The difficulty, the "mystery," he next thus explains, "We shall all be changed." A great alteration must take place in our nature. Even those of us who shall be alive at Christ's coming, and thus have no need to die; even we, if any of us should survive unto the day when the last trump shall sound, we as well as they who in all ages of the world have fallen asleep in the Lord, have died in the faith of Christ, we shall be changed.

What a day, what an hour, what a moment will that be! What a sound unheard before, that trumpet! What a change, to take place in the twinkling of an eye, for the corruptible to put on incorruption, for the mortal to put on immortality! Oh how happy will they be who shall then be found watching! Oh how great will be their privilege, to escape the pains of death, to be mortal yet not to die, to be corruptible, yet not to see corruption! Most plainly does the apostle intimate, that it was well for Christians in his time, much more in all ages afterwards, to live, to think, to act, as if that moment might at any time overtake them, as if that trump might at any time be heard. Most needful it is for all to be ever on the watch for that day and hour, of which no man knoweth, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father only. See Matth. 24. 36. Most reasonable it is for Him to speak of it in his word, as continually at hand, considering that with Him a thousand years are as one day. See 2 Pet. 3. 8. Most desirable for us to be glad that it is at hand, to pray that in our time God's kingdom may fully come; to wish that without any further risk of sorrow, without any longer waiting for our joy, we may enter at once into the courts of heaven, there to dwell for evermore.

But whether it shall be our lot to be thus highly favoured, or whether we must first, ere we enter into bliss, pass through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death, in any case "the time is short;" ch. 7. 29; "the day is at hand;" Rom. 13. 12; "the trumpet shall sound;" and the saying that is written shall be brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory." And what a victory is this! What an enemy, to be thus laid low! Our awful dissolution is thus made a change from corruptible to incorruption! Our melancholy end is thus turned into the beginning of eternal joy! Do we not long to partake of this goodly triumph? Could we not wish that this very moment, whilst we speak or hear, the enemy might come forward to the combat, and we approach and seize upon the spoil? But are we indeed thus eager, willing, ready; thus persuaded that for us to die is gain? If not, what hinders? It is sin. The sting of death still rankles in our wounds, and we are still afraid to encounter this last enemy. We dare not ~~die~~. We could not bear to close our eyes on life. We could not wish to open them on eternity. We have sinned. We are sinning. We purpose still to sin. We repent not of our sins, we believe not that they are forgiven. Such is the case with them that fear to die. Such was not the case with the apostle. Such is not the case with them that love the Lord, and know that God giveth them the victory, through Jesus Christ. They know that for them He has destroyed death, He has put away sin, He has fulfilled the law. They are thankful unto God for his inestimable gift. Whether they live or die they are "stedfast, unmoveable," they fear no terrors, they yield to no temptations. In their health, in their sickness, and in the moment of their death, they still abound in the work of the Lord, they still labour to do all the good they can, they still have joy and peace in believing; forasmuch as they know that their "labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Concerning the collection for the saints, and St. Paul's coming.

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your *†* liberality unto Jerusalem.

4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey

whithersoever I go.

7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.

10 Now if *Timotheus* come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

12 As touching *our* brother *Apollos*, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

† Gr. gift.

§ 515. *How to plan, and to express our planning for the future.*

Our Lord had taught the Jews that it was not unlawful to do works of mercy on the day which they kept for their sabbath. Whether this were the real seventh day from the creation of the world, or whether the right reckoning had been lost, either before or after the time of Moses, we have no sure means of knowing. Certain it is that on the first day of the Jewish week, Christians very soon began to keep their sabbath, and so have kept it unto the present time. And here we learn that works of charity on this day are not only not unlawful, but positively our duty to God our Saviour. For when St. Paul would exhort the Corinthians to make a charitable collection, he tells them, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." If then on this day we cast accounts at all, let it be to see how much we owe to God, how much we can spare to give unto the poor. "That there be no gatherings when I come." That is to say, set apart beforehand what you have to give, that when I arrive at Corinth, to take account of your collection, you may not be occupied in collecting it, but may give heed to what I shall then have to say unto yourselves. If then we wish on the sabbath to give alms, let us rather cast up our accounts the day before; that we may wait upon the Lord without distraction, on that day which He has appointed to be hallowed as his own.

And see how careful St. Paul was to avoid the risk of giving offence, the possibility of being suspected of selfishness, or wrong, in the conveying of this collection for the saints. As he would not have it gathered after his arrival, for fear of occupying time which might be better employed, so he would not appoint who should carry it, but told the Corinthians that whomsoever they should approve, them he would send, or with them, if it were meet, he would go himself. Let us therefore, besides our general endeavours to be true and just in all our dealings, let us be particularly watchful in case we are entrusted with any charitable funds, not only to do no wrong, but to give no room for being suspected of dishonesty. So few are they who give their time or attention to doing good, that others are apt to think they must have some selfish end in view. And the world, which is ever at enmity with God, is sure to hate, suspect, and slander those, who, like God, love to do good and distribute. But though we may thus reasonably expect to be reviled, we must take pains to give no handle for reviling. We must study to approve ourselves in all things to every man's conscience; we must "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Rom. 12. 17.

To these directions for their alms, the apostle adds some account of his plans and prospects during the winter and spring ensuing. "I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia." "It may be that I will abide and winter with you." "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." He gives them also directions for their behaviour, in case Timothy should come to them; telling them not to despise him, not to give less heed to his office and authority, by reason of what might seem wanting in his age; for so he instructed Timothy himself, "let no man despise thy youth." 1 Tim. 4. 12. And of another brother, Apollos, he informs them, that though he was not willing at that time, he would come when he should have time convenient. Now in all this, we may observe that the apostle does not make a point of saying in every instance what he says indeed most forcibly in one, "if the Lord permit." And therefore we need not scrupulously impose upon ourselves any particular form of words, to express our dependency on God, whenever we speak of plans for the future. Nor would it be right to abstain from all planning for the future, on the ground of our not knowing what an hour may bring forth. To provide for the duties of to-morrow may be often a chief part of the duty of to-day. To confer with others on our intentions, to let them know when we propose to visit them, whom to bring with us or to send, this may be an act of present kindness, to be done out of regard to Him who dwelleth in eternity. Let us but always think of Him as present, and we shall be safe from taking sinful thought for the morrow. Let us but always trust in Him for all that we design, and we need not always, though often we ought to say, that it is in his permission only that we trust.

Faithfulness and charity.

13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

16 That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboureth.

17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

18 For they have refreshed my spirit and your's: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

21 The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand.

22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.

24 My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

§ 516. *Dissension and dissenters.*

How hard it is to combine the two things here chiefly recommended, faithfulness and charity; watchfulness, firmness, manliness, in our attachment to the faith, and meekness, gentleness, humility towards those who oppose themselves! How hard it is, if we may judge from what we see in practice! How needful, if we may estimate the necessity from the example or from the counsel of the apostle. The last words of an epistle are usually counted to express that which is nearest to the writer's heart. The last words here written by St. Paul, express on the one hand, his love in Christ Jesus, and his desire for the grace of Christ Jesus, unto all; and on the other, his warning, that "if any man," any one of those to whom he wrote, to whom he sent his love in the Lord, any professed believer in Christ Jesus, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha;" that is to say, put aside for condemnation till the Lord cometh. And these words come next after the salutation of the apostle, signed, for their better certifying, with his own hand; the rest of the epistle having been written out by some one else. And in like manner we are here first exhorted to watch, to stand fast in the faith, to quit us like men, to be strong; and next to let all our things be done with charity. And again we are bid to submit ourselves to such as "have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." And this is one of the chief means towards the maintenance of unity in the faith, submission to them that are over us in the Lord. See 1 Thess. 5. 12. Whilst on the other hand, St. Paul has scarce given this direction, so needful to the Corinthians in their divided state, so plain a reproof for their divisions, when he heals the wound which he had thought fit to inflict, by telling them how glad he was to see their messengers, "Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus," mentioning them by name, for a proof of his personal regard, acknowledging the refreshment they had given to his spirit, adding as though he counted them to be now reconciled, the salutations of all the brethren, and of the churches, to them all, and bidding them greet each other with a holy kiss.

And this is indeed the spirit of this whole Epistle; in which the apostle insists at great length on the sinfulness of division, declares the grounds and the extent of Christian love, and applies it to the chief cases of difficulty, in which the Corinthians were at a loss to practise it. Let us then from the whole learn this lesson, as to those dissensions in religion, which so grievously prevail amongst ourselves. They are sin against God. They are scandal to the unbeliever. They are blemishes, or rather gross deformities in the character of the faithful. They are offences of the deepest dye against the will of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. However lightly they are esteemed amongst mankind, we must abominate them as being wickedness in the sight of God. We must abhor the sin. But God forbid that we should hate the sinner! We must abhor the sin; so as to avoid it most watchfully ourselves, so as to be sure that we in no way countenance or support it, that we in no way cause divisions, or give handle to those who cause them, that we do every thing in our power to remove them. Else how can we stand guiltless of that wrath and strife which we have helped to aggravate, or not helped to allay? We must hate the sin; but we must still love the sinner. We must stand fast in the faith; but it must be with charity. We must submit ourselves unto our ministers; but we must be kind to such as will not be subject. We must be ready to remove them that offend; and yet be able still to say, "The grace of our Lord," and also "my love be with you all in Christ Jesus." I am sorry for your sin. I grieve for the error of your way. I am concerned to think how greatly you transgress, in your departure from the faith, in your breach of unity. I am not offended that you conform not your views to mine, but I am shocked that we should not both be of one mind in Christ. I pray that we may both have a right judgment in all things. And I am sure that we then must have the same. God grant that we may have the same, and that the right! God grant that both in faith and love, all who differ may all be one!

St. Paul giveth thanks.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace *be* to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which *is* effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether

|| Or, *is wrought*.

we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you *is* stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 But we had the * sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*;

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

* Or, *answer*.

§ 517. *Comfort in tribulation.*

St. Paul writes a second letter to the Corinthians, to praise that in them which was amended, and to reprove further what still was wrong; being guided by the Holy Spirit of God, to enlarge by this means the revelation of the Gospel unto all churches of the saints, and especially to make it acceptable to them which were at Corinth. And with the latter view he joins with himself Timothy, whom he here calls his brother; and whose concurrence in what he had to say was of value for this reason, that he had so much to say about himself. For in this Epistle we shall find much which relates chiefly to the apostle's own feelings and conduct; these having been evil spoken of at Corinth, so that it was needful for him to justify himself, lest his ill name should be an injury to the Gospel. Whereinsoever we write or speak concerning ourselves, may it be not by choice but by constraint! may it be not for our own honour's sake, but for fear of compromising the honour of the Gospel! and may it be ever with that modesty, faithfulness, and truth, of which the apostle has here set us an example!

He begins with wishing grace and peace from God, who is the Father of all, and from his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. He then gives thanks to God for the comfort he had experienced in his tribulation; calling God "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." How pleasant it is to hear that these endearing names belong to Him who made us, to Him whom we have so often and so grievously offended, to Him whose wrath is so plainly revealed against all unrighteousness of men, to Him who so often chastens us in this present life, and who is able to make us suffer in eternity! How glad we ought to be, to communicate to others the comfort which from Him we have received ourselves! How thankful we ought to feel, that whatever sufferings the Gospel may entail on us, it affords us consolation, by Christ, in proportion; how joyful to be assured, that both our sufferings and our joy may minister, if we duly use them, towards the comfort and salvation of our brethren! May we never sniffer except with such patient submission, and in so just a cause, as may make the ills we meet with worthy to be called "the sufferings of Christ!" May we never fail to hope, for those who partake in our sorrows, sicknesses, or pains, that they also, through God's good gift, may be partakers of the consolation!

St. Paul would not have his brethren at Corinth to be ignorant of the trouble which came to him in Asia. And God has taken care that all of us also should hear of it, by having it here set down for our instruction. Let us note therefore how the apostle, and they that were with him, "were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that" they "despaired even of life." They "had the sentence of death" in themselves. This was the judgment they formed of their peril, under the violent persecution which they met with, that they should surely die. And why is it good for us to note these their sufferings? That we may note the source of their consolation. They learnt to trust not in themselves, "but in God which raiseth the dead." They knew that much more He could deliver them for the present if He would. It was a light matter for them to risk their lives on earth, when they counted death to be the entrance unto a better resurrection. They prayed, and reckoned also on the prayers of others. They prayed together, with a view to giving thanks for the gift bestowed, giving the thanks of many with one heart and soul. May we, when we are tried by pressure above our strength, by peril of life, and apprehension of instant death, trust not in ourselves but in the Lord! May we feel assured that He will either now save our lives, or in any case hereafter save us everlastingly! May we pray, and join in praying with each other, not only in order to gain the help we pray for, but with a further view to the joy of giving thanks for it unto God, when in his good time we have obtained it!

St. Paul accounteth for his change of plan.

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also *are* our's in the day of the Lord Jesus.

15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second || benefit;

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judæa.

17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose

according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

18 But *as* God *is* true, our * word toward you was not yea and nay.

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

|| Or, *grace*.

* Or, *preaching*.

§ 518. *Of trust in the promises of God.*

Here is another ground of comfort and of joy, the testimony of conscience. Most consolatory it is, when we are accused of double dealing, to feel assured, on sufficient grounds, that we have conversed "in simplicity and godly sincerity;" and to be aware that this is not in our own strength, not by our own worldly wisdom, "but by the grace of God." And such had been St. Paul's conduct to the Corinthians. And such was now the testimony of his conscience, both in respect of others, and especially in respect of them. And this he was sure they would acknowledge, when they read what he had to write. As also they had acknowledged in part; even many of them, the greater part, having been free to own the mutual good will between the apostle and themselves, how they were each to other a subject of rejoicing "in the day of the Lord Jesus." Now in what he says of being acknowledged, he most probably refers to the manner in which they received his first Epistle, as reported to him by Titus, who had conveyed it. See eb. 12. 18. And that he adds "in part," this implies, that some were still refractory.* And this accounts for it, that whilst some parts of this second Epistle are evidently designed to encourage the faithful, others are no less plainly calculated to rebuke the froward, and to convict the false.

One of the charges likely to arise against St. Paul at Corinth was this, that he had used lightness in not visiting that city at the time when he had proposed to do so. See 1 Cor. 16. 6. Here therefore he explains to them, that though he had seen cause to alter his plan, he had by no means changed his mind. When he was minded to come to them before, it was in the same confident reliance on their good will, which he now entertained; it was for no private gain unto himself, but in order to confer on them the benefit of a second visit, which he was still desirous to impart. He framed not these purposes according to the flesh, with any worldly views. He was not likely to have changed them, except for sufficient cause, except with a view to the same end, their good. And this he solemnly assures them had been his motive in this instance; "to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." For their benefit he desired to come. For their benefit he for a while delayed his visit. It was good for them, in this instance, to be spared the exercise of his apostolic authority, in the chastisement of their offence. And he would not have them count him, as they might else have been apt to do, to lord it over their faith, but rather reckon him to be a helper of their joy. Thus then let us now reckon of our ministers. Not masters they are but helpers, not lords but guides; to shew the way, and to walk therein themselves; to stand by the faith they preach to others; to share the joy which they help others to obtain.

Thus St. Paul had not been changeable in his mind, though he had not done the very thing which he purposed. And hence he takes occasion to observe, that much more the Son of God, whom he had preached, and "all the promises of God in him," are "not yea and nay," are unchanged and unchangeable. Yet how slow are most of us to receive these gracious tidings! How averse to put our trust in these glorious assurances! When man speaks we readily believe. When man purposes what hereafter he may probably either not be able or not see fit to do, we reckon the thing as already sure, we hold him to his promise, we feel aggrieved like the Corinthians if it be not performed. When God promises, and that with most infallible assurance, when He establishes us, and anoints us with his grace, even his Spirit in our hearts, as the seal and earnest of his promise; oh why are we so reluctant to believe? why catch we not with like eagerness at his words? why feel we not much more sure of their fulfilment? Why? if it be not that we do not wish them to be true. Why? if it be not that we had rather they should fail. Let us but long for heaven, let us but find ourselves labouring through faith in Christ to live unto the Lord; and we shall then count what God has said for certain truth, we shall then feel thoroughly assured that through the atonement of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are saved.

The exercise of mercy in discipline.

1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy* of you all.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

6 Sufficient to such a man is this || punishment, which *was inflicted* of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* * in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

|| Or, *censure*.

* Or, *in the sight*.

§ 519. *How we ought to forgive offenders.*

In the first Epistle, the Corinthians were reprov'd for favour shewn to one that had "his father's wife." And they were bidden to "put away" from themselves "that wicked person." 1 Cor. 5. 1, 13. Here they are instructed how to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Gal. 6. 1. The first passage might well serve for our guide, in exercising the severity of discipline. And this latter is no less fit to direct us, in tempering with mercy the judgment of the church. For see how unwilling was St. Paul to come again to the Corinthians in heaviness, to be forced to manifest displeasure, and to inflict punishment, on the second occasion of his visiting them! See how he assured them, that they whom he would in such case have to make sorry, were the very persons who alone could make him glad, even by their repenting and obeying! See how he wrote his Epistle before he went, on purpose that when he came he might have joy instead of sorrow; being persuaded that they would feel for the pain they had given him, and would remember that his happiness depended upon theirs!

Such were the feelings of the apostle, towards those who had offended; he having as an apostle the supreme controul of the discipline in the church. Such ought to be the feelings of those who bear rule, in any discipline which now might be restored. Such ought to be the feelings of all parties concerned, towards those who have fallen away into sin, whether there be any discipline or not. We ought to wish, not to have to go to them in heaviness. We ought to feel, that whilst they are sorry we can scarce be glad. We ought by any means in our power, whether by writing, by message, or by the intercession of friends, to prevent, as far as possible, the risk of rupture, the necessity of severity. We ought to appeal to their best affections, to their sympathy for ourselves, to their conviction that our joy depends on theirs. We ought to write, or speak, or act, "out of much affliction and anguish of heart;" shedding tears of tenderness for their sins and sorrows, in proof of the abundance of our love. We ought carefully to except others from any share in the guilt incurred by one, or by some; and not to overcharge many for the sins of few. Thus ought the church to qualify her severity of discipline. Thus ought each member of the church to heal, by the application of love and sympathy, the wounds which are inflicted by faithfulness and truth.

And further if the offender should prove penitent, we must in due time restore him to his privileges in the church, to his place in our friendship and society. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment," whatever it may have been, if it have brought him to godly sorrow. So that we ought to forgive and comfort, we ought to make our love manifest and sure to him, we ought to be as willing to forgive as the apostle here describes himself, as "in the person of Christ," as administering to each other the love we have experienced from Him, out of regard to his will, out of pure affection for our brother's soul, out of watchfulness against Satan and his manifold devices. The offender had given proof of his contrition; else there would have been no risk of his being "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." The Corinthians had given proof of their obedience in all things, by putting away from themselves the offender, whom at first they had been too willing to countenance. And now when Satan would have taken advantage of this occasion, for estranging their affections from their brother, the apostle beseeches them to forgive; and that not out of indifference to sin, but out of regard to the forgiveness of the Lord. Let not us therefore be tempted by Satan to feel bitterly towards those, whom for a time it is our duty to avoid. Let us be neither too weak to avoid them for a time, nor too severe to renew our friendship in due season. Let us watch with sympathy their growing sorrow. Let us mingle our tears, though apart, with theirs. Let us offer up joint prayers for mercy, issuing from lips which are not allowed to meet, but presented to the same throne of grace, by the same prevailing Intercessor. Thus shall we not lose but win our brother, get advantage over Satan, gain honour for our Lord, and have joy in our own hearts for ever.

St. Paul always made to triumph in Christ.

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

|| Or, deal deceitfully with.

§ 520. *God's glory not hindered by man's perversity.*

What could be more delightful to St. Paul, than to find at Troas a door opened unto him of the Lord, when he went there "to preach Christ's Gospel?" Where was he more likely to settle for a time, to have joy and peace in abiding? Yet even there he had no rest in his spirit because he found not Titus his brother. Even thence he departed in order to go into Macedonia. And this he mentions by way of shewing the anxiety he felt, as to the reception of his first Epistle by the Corinthians, as to their compliance with the directions he had given them. For from Titus he expected to hear of their behaviour: and in Macedonia he expected to meet with Titus. And there it was that at last he received from Titus the great consolation of hearing, how earnest was their desire, how great their mourning, how fervent their mind towards him. See ch. 7. 7. Thus his affection for this church of his own planting was maintained through the period of their delinquency: to glow with renewed warmth and tenderness, on the tidings of their reconciliation. Thus the new door, which was opened for his labours in the Gospel, could not engage the attention of his heart, whilst he was in doubt as to the obedience, faithfulness, and love, of those whom he had before begotten in Christ. See 1 Cor. 4. 15. Thus God allows us to indulge, even in the doing of his work, the yearnings of natural affection; directing our right choice, and overruling our mistakes, so as to promote his greater glory in the end.

Whether St. Paul were right or wrong in taking leave of Troas, God always caused him to triumph in Christ; God made manifest by means of him "the savour of his knowledge" "in every place." And therefore he gives thanks to God for this signal honour, that he was "unto God a sweet savour of Christ," in all who heard him; that he had grace to speak in Christ, not as many who corrupted God's word, but "as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God." When he contemplated the eminence of this privilege, for a frail and erring being to minister unto the glory of his Creator, for one of those whose sins cost the death of Christ, to be an instrument effectual in his hands, for making known his Gospel to the world, well might he ask in humble acknowledgment of his own incompetence, "Who is sufficient for these things?" No man, no not even St. Paul. No man is sufficient of himself. No man was more aware than this apostle of his own insufficiency. And therefore whilst he asserted his apostolic authority, whilst he gave thanks for his universal success, whilst he compared his progress to a triumphal march, where sweetest flowers were strewed along the path, in honour of the Saviour he proclaimed, the conqueror of sin and death; yet he testified in the midst of his holy rapture that it was not in his own strength that he succeeded. God grant unto our ministers that they may feel and own their insufficiency for the work they have in hand! God grant unto their people, that these also may be ready in any success they meet with against sin and Satan, to join in the devout words of David; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise: for thy loving mercy, and for thy truth's sake!" Ps. 115. 1.

And here, lastly, let us observe how St. Paul speaks of his ministry, and how true it is of all the ministry of the Gospel, that it is "unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish: to the one" "the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." God's glory cannot be hindered by our perversity, though He is pleased to reckon that we promote it by our obedience and faith. If however we believe not, and perish, God's ordinances are notwithstanding precious; his ministers, his word, his sacraments, his church, redound notwithstanding to the honour of his name. Though light dazzle and make blind the eye that is diseased, it is still light to them that are in health. The melody of sounds, the savour of sweet scents, are acceptable to well ordered senses, though to such as are deranged they may be unwelcome. And so truth also is truth, and grace is grace, though many hear the Gospel only to their fall. And so they that fall, no less than they that stand, they that perish, as well as they that shall be saved, will be made to justify, the first by their condemnation, and the other by their everlasting joy, God's wisdom in the redemption of mankind.

St. Paul appealeth to the Corinthians as his epistle.

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3 *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of

stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God:

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

|| Or, quickeneth.

§ 521. *How ought to magnify the grace of God.*

Few things are more painful than to be put upon our defence, where we cannot be justified without seeming to commend ourselves. Yet even this pain we must be willing to undergo, rather than acquiesce in a false accusation, to the scandal of those who might else believe it. Only let us be sure that the sounding our own praise is not our object. Only let us be as far from desiring so to do, as St. Paul in this passage of his Epistle. He commended not himself, as his enemies supposed; for he had already owned his own insufficiency. See ch. 2. 16. He commended not himself; nor needed he any letters of commendation, either from the Corinthians, or to them. For they were, as he here tells them, a commendatory letter, written in the hearts of himself and of his fellow labourers. Their faith, and zeal, and obedience, of which he cherished in his heart, most fond remembrance, and most lively hope, these might be known and read of all men; these testified to all who knew of them, the faithfulness of him who had been their teacher in the Gospel. How forcibly does he here admonish the Corinthians, that they ought so to adorn their faith by holiness of life, as that all who heard of their being Christians, might give credit to the apostle, and through him also glory to the Lord! How skilfully does he turn from the objection which he apprehended against himself, to the encouragement which he would convey to them!

Let us remember, whilst we read his animating words, that we also are his epistle. Let us feel as if all men had their eyes upon our conduct, to see whether we do according to what St. Paul has written, according to what our Lord demands. For we are not only the epistle of St. Paul; we are “manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,” ministered by those whom He appoints to minister, prepared by them, but really written by our Lord and Saviour; “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” This is our description. This is the account of what all Christians ought to be, of what all true Christians are. And so they are described beforehand by the prophet; “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Jer. 31. 33. Let us examine then what that is, which in our hearts is manifest. Is it what we may conceive to have been written by our Saviour? Is it love for God; or is it enmity to his will? Is it peace towards each other; or is it jealousy, and envying, and strife? Is it purity, humility, gentleness, and truth; or is it falsehood, fierceness, pride, and lasciviousness? We may know the writer by what is written. We may judge whether it is what Christ wishes to publish to the world. Would we wish our hearts to be known and read of all men? If not, how can we be such an epistle, as is here meant? Would that which is most legible in our hearts, redound to God’s honour? Would it appear to have been written by “the Spirit of the living God?” If not, if only sin, and that unrepented, can therein be read; in vain has all his goodness been poured on our hearts, these are not fleshy tables, they are tables of stone, which it is well if He do not straightway break to pieces in his wrath, and cast away in his displeasure for ever.

“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.” Such trust had the apostle towards God, through Christ; such trust as not to need to commend himself, as not to need letters of commendation, as that he was persuaded, that those to whom he wrote would prove to be to his praise, and to the glory of the Gospel. And this trust he had through Christ, not as though by his own exertions he had converted or confirmed the Corinthians. For here he again owns his utter insufficiency to compass any such success by himself, his utter dependence on God for his sufficiency. Whilst at the same time he thankfully declares, that God had made him, and those who wrought with him, sufficient “ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit:” of the New Testament, not of the Old; of that which “giveth life,” not that which “killeth.” See Rom. 3. 20. In like manner let us count it no presumption to praise God for such ability or grace, as He has really given us. To claim the credit as our own, this would be presumptuous. But is it not also a disparagement of his honour, to suppress, through false humility and affected shame, the praise which is really his? Is it not arrogance which makes us reckon our success to be our own? And if, when we profess to know that it is God’s, we are still reluctant to proclaim the victory, must not this be because we are still counting it to be ours?

The Old Testament and the New compared.

7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

11 For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

|| Or, boldness.

13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 And we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

|| of the Lord the Spirit.

§ 522. *Our free access to the glory of the Gospel.*

Though the Old Testament is not contrary to the New, the New Testament is superior to the Old. And yet the first was excellent in its season. And in order to value as we ought the excellency of the second, we must consider well the excellence of the first. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were "given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3. 16. They revealed the will of God to man, so much of it as it was then fitting for man to know, and to so many of mankind as were fit to know it. They were glorious; though they convicted man of sin, and sentenced him to death. They were glorious; as expressing the glory of Jehovah, his justice, mercy, and truth. They were glorious; as signifying beforehand the redemption of mankind by the death of Christ. They were glorious; as expressing the beauty of holiness, the perfection of that righteousness which God requires at our hands, and which God alone can enable us to fulfil. Thus was the ministration of death glorious; even the letter, in the Old Testament, "written and engraven in stone," in that which, when administered to man, proved only the means of condemnation.

How much rather then shall "the ministration of the spirit" be glorious? By the one we were condemned. The other is the ministration of righteousness, whereby we are justified. By the one we are sentenced to death. The other is "the ministration of the spirit;" and "the spirit giveth life:" ver. 6; the spiritual doctrines of the Gospel, its spiritual privileges, its spiritual aids, and above all "the Lord," who "is that Spirit," He is able to give life unto every man that believeth. The one "was made glorious," considered in itself. The other so much excels it, that the first, when compared, has "no glory in this respect." The one was to be done away; nay, has been done away. The other "remaineth;" yea, that love in which it chiefly consists, "never faileth." 1 Cor. 13. 8. Oh how great then is our privilege that we are admitted to this better covenant, to this which in glory exceeds that which was made glorious, to this which does not condemn but justify, which ministers not to death but unto life!

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." This was the method of those who first proclaimed the Gospel. And like to it must be the mind of us who have received those tidings of great joy. "And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face," because the children of Israel could not bear to see the glory of their covenant, which was to be abolished; not such is the glory of the Gospel, no such vail is on the countenance of our Mediator; no such fear need we have to look into the end of that which has indeed no end but is to last for ever. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We are no longer in bondage unto fear. We are free to approach, as sons, unto God as to a Father. We are free to use his written word, free to search his inspired Scriptures, free to prove all things, free to comprehend what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know as far as possible the love of God, which passeth knowledge, and to be filled, so abundant is his gift, with all the fulness of God. See Eph. 3. 18, 19. The children of Israel saw only through a vail. "Which vail is done away in Christ." Upon their heart even now there is a vail. Though when Israel "shall turn to the Lord," from them also "the vail shall be taken away." But we Christians, all of us, with no vail upon our hearts between us and the countenance of our Lord, look stedfastly on his revealed glory, see as in a glass the image of our Redeemer; and by the sight of what He is, by the knowledge of what He has been to us, are changed into the same image, are converted unto the likeness of Himself, step by step, from grace to grace, "from glory to glory; even as by the Spirit of the Lord," even by the Holy Ghost which He has given us. Such is our liberty, that we can look upon his glory. Such is his glory, that we can behold and live. It exceeds in glory; and yet we exceed in looking on it. Oh that whilst we look we may be changed! Oh that we may be changed into the image of our Lord!

St. Paul justifieth his ministry.

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of * dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the

glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

* Gr. shame.

328 *The faithful minister.*

As Timothy is joined with St. Paul in the first address of this Epistle to the Corinthians, so we must reckon both to be spoken of throughout; except where it is plain that what is said belongs to one. And not of these two only are most of these things written, but of others also who were their fellow labourers in the Gospel. And not of them only, but of all Christian ministers to the end of time. For in most of what is here said, to justify our apostle to one church, we may find matter of profitable instruction to all ministers in all churches; nay, also to all Christian people.

In the words before us we learn of Christian ministers, that if they would follow the example of St. Paul, they must consider themselves to "have this ministry," to be intrusted with a solemn charge, to be made servants of Christ, not lords over the consciences of men; and to "have received mercy," to have experienced no common degree of favour at God's hand in being intrusted with so honourable an office. And feeling that their trust is great and glorious, they must "faint not." They must not be dispirited by ill success. They must persevere through evil report and good report, in preaching salvation by Christ Jesus. There must be no concealment, no artifice, no craftiness, in their handling the word of God. They must not interpret it with a view to please their hearers, or with a design to exalt themselves. They must not labour to adapt it to any system of their own. They must not hold one doctrine in secret, and preach another to their people. But they must make manifest the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to all men: and so commend themselves "to every man's conscience in the sight of God." They must not imagine that they can secure more large success, by acting on the principles of worldly wisdom; or suppose that the rejection of the Gospel by many, is to be avoided by adulterating the truth. It is the fault not of the Gospel, but of them that are lost. It is Satan, whom the worldly minded serve for God; he it is who makes them unable to behold "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ;" he it is who holds the vail over their hearts, to hinder this bright image of God from shining into the darkness which there prevails.

The faithful minister therefore preaches not himself, "but Christ Jesus the Lord." He follows not his own devices in his preaching, nor seeks to bring into notice his own ability, nor desires to establish his own authority. He knows that no such artifices can save the lost. He trusts only to that Saviour, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, see Heb. 1. 3, to Him only he trusts for giving sight unto the blind, and safety to the lost. There is darkness upon the face of the deep. There is confusion in the soul of the sinner; so that he is scarcely able to discern right from wrong, good from evil, heaven from hell. He is on the brink of the pit of destruction, and knows it not. He is beset with enemies who would take away his life, and is not aware. The flames of that fire which is never quenched, are lighted all around him; and he sleeps, instead of flying for deliverance. And shall man pretend in such emergency to turn the night into day? None but God could say, "Let there be light: and there was light." Gen. 1. 3. Only in Christ's name, and as his servants, can we hope effectually to proclaim, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5. 14.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." This accounts for the choice of instruments so weak and frail, as are the very best and most able of mankind. Whether as ministers, or as members of the church of Christ, we seek to make the Gospel known, we must feel that we are but mean, unworthy instruments. And whilst we seek to be less unworthy than we are, we must admire the wisdom of Him, who out of our unworthiness contrives to teach this truth, that "the excellency of the power" is his own. Oh let us then look to Him as our Teacher. Let us look to Christ as our great High Priest. Let us not fix too fondly our affection on any one of his servants upon earth. But whilst we thankfully profit by their ministry, and acknowledge the value of their services, whilst we respect their office, honour their gifts, lament their faults, and pray for their prosperity; let us look up beyond their ministry to the Shepherd of the shepherds; let us remember that the excellency of the power is not theirs but his; let us pray to be taught by Him who cannot err; let us seek the help of Him who never fails.

The trials and support of the apostle.

8 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

9 *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

10 *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

11 *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

12 *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*

13 *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, 'I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;*

14 *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus*

|| *Or, not altogether without help, or, means.*

shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

15 *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*

16 *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

18 *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

¹ Ps. 116. 10.

§ 524. *Our Christian warfare and reward.*

"Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all." Ps. 34. 19. How exactly was this promise fulfilled in the sufferings endured by the first preachers of the Gospel! How fully will it be realized in us, if we like them count all things but loss for Christ! See Phil. 3. 8. We may not live a life of ease. We have a conflict to carry on in our own hearts. We have war to wage with the enemy of souls. We may not feel his assaults, and not resist. We dare not, when we see him ravaging the heedless world, deceiving the simple, overreaching the wise, getting the poor into his den, and slaying the rich in the midst of their treasures; we dare not, as true soldiers of Jesus Christ, we dare not desert our Saviour's ranks, we dare not refuse to fight his enemy; we would not if we durst. We long to help in the deliverance of our brethren. We desire to warn them of their danger, to assist them in avoiding it. We are eager, forward, watchful, diligent, to get advantage over Satan, to foil his devices, to overthrow his kingdom on the earth, and to drive him back, whence he came, to the pit of destruction.

These feelings, these principles, these duties, keep us, if we be Christians indeed, in a state of perpetual warfare. "We are troubled on every side" by the craftiness of our enemy. We are perplexed by the backwardness, waywardness, and indifference of our brethren, who ought to be our friends. We are persecuted by those in whose behalf we are contending. We are cast down, nay even trampled under foot, in the fierce onset of our strife against iniquity. But we are not destroyed, we are not forsaken, we are not in despair; nay, we are not distressed. In our sorrow we still have joy, in our disappointment hope. Though all men forsake us, God does not forsake us. Though we fall, God lifts us up. We hold aloft the standard of the cross: we cling to it for our safety: we shew it forth for the deliverance of our brethren; in our most fearful encounters, or most sad reverses, we are "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh," that we may behave agreeably to the sign under which we are enlisted, that we may be crucified to the world, to the lusts of the flesh.

And thus we do, thus we live, thus contend for the mastery, chiefly through faith and love. We have regard to the life of others, in the death to which we expose ourselves. We do all things for the sake of others; "that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." It is that his grace may abound towards them; that they may value it, profit by it, turn it to his praise, make it minister to his glory; this is the great object of our desire in all our labour of love towards each other. And love takes this direction by reason of our faith. "We also believe, and therefore speak." We are persuaded that Christ died for all men, that God "raised up the Lord Jesus," that He will "raise up us also by Jesus," and that He is able and willing to present us with them, and them with us, blameless, through the merits of our Lord. We "therefore speak." We cannot hold our peace. We cannot refrain from admonishing our brethren. We cannot believe that except they repent they perish, and not bid them repent and be saved.

"For which cause we faint not;" by reason of our faith, by reason of our love, by reason of those things which we believe and desire, and hope, and long for. Our warfare may wear out the body. It does but exercise, and strengthen, and confirm the soul. Each trial, through God's grace, makes us better able to endure. Each affliction, so sure is his promise, prepares us for the greater glory. How light becomes our present tribulation, when thus weighed against the joy we look for! The one "for a moment," the other for ever! The one we see. But what is sight? How soon it fails, grows dim in age, or comes to nought in death. The other is not seen. Eye hath not seen it. But faith beholds. For God has spoken. And He will bring it to pass. And it lasts for ever. The senses which enjoy it never fail. The soul which has heaven, never dies. It is to be, and to be for ever. It is to be for ever happy. It is to dwell where God is, with Him. It is to reign, where Christ reigns, in glory.

How we groan whilst in the body.

1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven :

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest

of the Spirit.

6 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord :

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight :)

8 We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we *||* labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

|| Or, endeavour.

§ 525. *The judgment seat of Christ.*

The apostle here still describes himself, and would have all Christians conceive themselves described, as in a state of distress. "In this we groan." Though "the things which are not seen are eternal," ch. 4. 18, though we know that when our earthly house, which is but temporary, shall fall to pieces, when the worn out body shall moulder in corruption, "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" yet, notwithstanding, "in this we groan." We are painfully anxious to attain unto that heavenly abode. We desire to be clothed with that immortality. Here we feel burdened; weary and heavy laden; depressed with the conviction of our own sinfulness, and with the many proofs of sin which we see around us. Not that we can ever bring ourselves to desire the decease of the body; but that we could wish, and ought to wish, to have it renewed in glory. We could wish, and ought to wish, to have mortality swallowed up of life. Else how are we believing in God's word, that Christ is ascended into heaven, see Eph. 4. 9, 10, if we cannot feel, on the review of our present state, that to depart and to be with Christ is far better? See Phil. 1. 23. Or how believe we what He has promised to ourselves, forgiveness of sin, and resurrection unto life eternal; if we are not persuaded that to us "to die is gain?" Phil. 1. 21. Let us believe what we are told, let us know what may be known from the word of God, and we shall then groan within ourselves, whilst we wait for the redemption of the body; see Rom. 8. 23; we shall have no rest in our spirit, till we enter into possession of those good things, which God has prepared for them that love Him. See 1 Cor. 2. 9.

And of these things He has already given us an earnest, in the gift of the Spirit, in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, in the heavenly temper and disposition, which by this means we find within ourselves. "Therefore we are always confident." If we find ourselves pure in heart, being corrupt by nature; if meek, when we should else be angry; humble, instead of proud; and not covetous, but heavenly minded; have we not herein proof that God is fitting us for a better resurrection? Know we not hence, that whilst we are present here, we are hindered from something better that belongs to us elsewhere? And should we not be well pleased rather "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord?" For we live, if our life be such as this, "by faith and not by sight." Our daily walk is influenced by the evidence of things unseen; and shall not this work also on the desires of our heart? We now deny ourselves, out of regard to what God has commanded. And how can we help also being grieved within ourselves out of our longing for what He has promised? How can we help labouring, so longing as to labour, "that, whether present or absent, we may be" acceptable unto Him?

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" most affecting thought; before the throne of our Redeemer! Therefore is He Judge, because He died for us. Therefore He has a right to call us to account. And therefore we shall feel with tenfold force, his right to sentence us to death, if we have not lived according to his will. For now that we are his people, redeemed by Him, saved by his free gift, by the sacrifice of Himself, we are bought by Him with the price of his own blood, we are bound to do all his pleasure. Hence it follows that we shall hereafter receive good or evil, according to the things done in the body. According to the life we lead in this our tabernacle on the earth, will be our sentence when it shall be dissolved. Thus the Christian is not exempt from "the terror of the Lord." Ver. 11. The Christian must join in the confession of the Psalmist, "There is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared." Ps. 130. 4. Our knowledge that we have a house prepared for us in heaven, our enjoying the earnest of the Spirit; these things make us so much the more afraid of doing any thing to displease our Saviour. We shall be judged as they that have been forgiven. We shall be judged by Him, through whose blood we have forgiveness. We shall be judged as having had help offered to our prayers, and heaven secured upon our believing. Oh let us then know at once the mercy of God, and also the terrors of the Lord! Let us feel the one to be connected with the other! Let us "fear God, and give glory to Him," the glory that is due unto his redeeming love; "for the hour of his judgment is come!" Rev. 14. 7.

The minister of reconciliation.

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory * in appearance, and not in heart.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the

flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, || *he is* a new creature: ¹old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath † committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

* Gr. *in the face*.

|| Or, let him be.

¹ Isa. 43. 19. Rev. 21. 5.

† Gr. *put in us*.

§ 526. *The terms of peace.*

St. Paul would persuade men by "the terror of the Lord," as well as by "the love of Christ." Both constrain us. By both he had endeavoured to constrain the Corinthians; as was manifest, he trusted, unto God, and also unto them. And here he reminds them of his reason for justifying himself, as he did in this appeal to their consciences, and to God. This was not in order to commend himself. It was that they might have an answer to give to men in his behalf, and thanks also to offer in his name to God. It was "the love of Christ" that constrained him to persuade men by "the terror of the Lord." For thus he argued: Christ "died for all." All men must therefore be by nature dead; all must, but for Him, have died eternally. And if He died in their stead, in their behalf, in atonement for their sin, then must they be bound henceforth not to "live unto themselves, but unto Him;" then must they be liable to so much sorer punishment if they put Him to an open shame. See Heb. 6. 6. and 10. 29. How then shall we refrain from warning all for whom Christ died, that they must hereafter stand before his judgment seat?

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Because we are bound to live unto Him who died for us, we must live with new motives, new feelings, new language, new conduct. Our views of each other, and our views of Christ, must be changed from what they were when we lived after the flesh. Being in Christ, we must be each of us "a new creature." New purposes must animate our hearts. New labours, even those of love, must occupy our lives. Old things must pass away. All things must become new. We must not be changed only in one point, or in a few points, but in all. We must not give up only one sin, or a few sins, but all. We must not seek after one grace only, or a few graces, but all. For God is able to give all, as well as some, or one. He is able to change all, as well as some, or one. "All things are of God," as well as some, or one. Having given for us his Son, He will with Him give us all things. Having "reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ," He will in all things make us like unto Himself. Having "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," He will also make us to be "the righteousness of God in him." He will count us for righteous, as He counted Christ for sin. He will count us for righteous, us who knew no righteousness. And hence He will make us to be what He esteems us. By our sense of his mercy in so esteeming us, all unworthy as we are of his regard, He will work in us a desire to be what He would have us; He will guide us to do good instead of evil; He will make us new creatures in Christ.

How different is this view of our redemption, how different these regards towards our blessed Lord, from those which St. Paul himself had entertained, when he knew Christ "after the flesh;" when he knew Jesus by name as the Author of the Gospel, but knew Him not by faith as the Saviour of St. Paul himself, and of all them that believe! Once he persecuted. See now how zealously he preaches! See how he glories in the gift he had received of God, not only to be reconciled by Jesus Christ, but to be a minister of this reconciliation! See how plainly he states the terms of peace: "God was in Christ," yea Christ is God; "reconciling the world unto himself," yea, reconciling and being reconciled; "not imputing their trespasses unto them," yea, looking on us as free from sin! Nor does God by his apostle only tell us of this peace. He beseeches us to accept it. "Be ye," it is "in Christ's stead" that we are exhorted, "Be ye reconciled to God." Ye have been enemies. Ye may now be friends. Ye have been strangers. Ye may now be sons. "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him." Isa. 57. 19.

Lord, who givest peace, give us the heart to welcome it! Lord, who didst once die for all, give us the will to live henceforth unto Thee!

St. Paul's ministry and privations.

1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, ¹ I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all things *approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, || in tumults, in

labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

¹ Is. 49. 8.

* Gr. commending.

|| Or, in tossings to and fro.

§ 527. *How to approve ourselves in all things.*

That we receive not the grace of God in vain, this is what St. Paul beseeches us, this is what he laboured to effect in the Corinthians, this it is the chief business of Christian ministers to bring to pass amongst us. We have received the grace of God. His free gift has been announced to us. Nay, his sign and seal has been set on us in baptism, assuring us of all Gospel privileges, conveying to us according to our age and fitness all Gospel graces. And yet all this we shall have received in vain, unless we love and live accordingly. And therefore has God ordered it, lest the gift should be of none effect, that ministers should be set apart throughout all ages of the church, whose business it is to exhort their brethren, to instruct them in his will, to invite them to his supper, and if possible to compel them to come in. "Now," they must say continually, as long as earth shall last, "now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." Oh that they may raise their voice on high, and make their message to be heard! Oh that the rest may not be deaf to their entreaty!

"Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed." This was St. Paul's first care in the exercise of this the teacher's office; to give no scandal; lest he should injure, by his own transgressions, the cause in which he ministered, the cause of Christ. "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God." This was the other chief point in his behaviour, to do all the good he could, in all things to make shine before men the light of Christian conduct, see Matt. 5. 16, to make manifest in his life the beauty of holiness. See Psalm 29. 2. It is not enough then for ministers to stand clear of evil, they must be forward to do good. It is not enough that they give no offence, bring no blame on the Gospel in which they minister: They must recommend it by the holiness of their lives. They must adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. See Tit. 2. 10. And this, let us all remember, this is our duty, as well as theirs. For under the Gospel all are in some sort ministers. All are strictly charged to edify each other. See 1 Thess. 5. 11. All have it set before them as a chief object of their ambition, the converting of a sinner from the error of his way. See James 5. 20.

Let us see therefore what instances the apostle mentions, by way of teaching us to approve ourselves in all things. "In much patience." We must cheerfully put up with disappointment. "In afflictions, in necessities, in distresses." We must submit without murmuring to whatsoever tribulation it may please God to bring upon us for conscience sake. Nay, we must glory in tribulation: and give thanks that herein we are made like unto our Lord. "In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults." Of these, thanks to God's goodness in establishing the Gospel, we now run little risk. How much more then ought we to take thankfully at his hands our comparatively light privations! "In labours, in watchings, in fastings." How anxiously ought we to avoid a life of ease, and sloth, and luxury! How surely ought we to prefer, wheresoever we have our choice, work to rest, wakefulness to sleep, and abstinence to plentiful abundance!

"By pureness," even chastity, in thought and deed; "by knowledge," even understanding of God's revealed will; "by longsuffering, by kindness," being ready to endure grief, suffering wrongfully, see 1 Pet. 2. 19, being mindful to overcome evil with good; see Rom. 12. 21; "by the Holy Ghost," without whose help we can approve ourselves in nothing; "by love unfeigned, by the word of truth," so as that we speak the truth in love; see Eph. 4. 15; "by the power of God," not trusting in our own, but armed with his might for perfect righteousness; by these means we must also labour to make known unto our brethren the light of the glorious Gospel. Whether we have honour, and good report, we must be humble. Whether we have ill report and dishonour, we must still be meek. When counted for deceivers, we must be content to be still true; when slighted by men, still thankful that we are known of God. Our chastisements, however severe, only invigorate our life. Our death is to die no more. Our sorrows are consistent with our rejoicing always. Our poverty cannot hinder us from treasure in heaven, nor hinder us from helping others to be rich for ever. Our having nothing that we count our own, in this present world, helps us towards possessing heaven for ever.

Against fellowship with unbelievers.

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or

what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 'And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

¹ Lev. 26. 12.

² Is. 52. 11.

³ Jer. 31. 1.

§ 528. *With whom we must agree, and with whom not.*

St. Paul would win the affection of the Corinthians by the expression of his own. "Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." It is well for the mouth to profess confidence in those we love. It is well to speak to them without reserve of our own acts and feelings. But let us see that the heart feels what the mouth professes. Let us see that we really love our brethren. Then to speak to them in the language of affection, as St. Paul here does to the Corinthians, would be the best means to confirm their regard, or to reconcile them if estranged. Are there amongst our friends any who have been lacking in their remembrance of us; any who have neglected our wishes, and set at nought our regard? Let us assure them that they "are not straitened in us," that they occupy the same room in our good wishes as before. Let us make them feel, if it be possible, that they are straitened only in themselves; that they have only to enlarge their own hearts, and we should again be as good friends as ever. Most affecting is the example here set us by St. Paul, in conciliating the erring Corinthians. Let us be as willing as he was to revive the spirit of the contrite. Let us count the Gospel for a ministry of reconciliation, as well between man and man, as between man and God. Let us overcome evil with good. Let us warm by our charity the love of our brethren. And in return for our own enlarged feelings let us appeal to them as for a suitable return, "Be ye also enlarged."

* But though the apostle thus graciously entreated erring Christians, he would by no means sanction the promiscuous intercourse of Christians with unbelievers. Nay he seems to speak of it as one point in the renewed affection of the Corinthians towards himself, that they should in this especially comply with his injunctions, in not being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." In which expression there is a manifest allusion to the precept in the law of Moses: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together." Deut. 22. 10. Whence we may understand that this very precept was significant of God's abhorrence of idolatry, that He would not have his people mingle with the heathen who dwelt around them, be joined with them in marriage, or society, in traffick, or labour, or amusement. In like manner neither would Christ have us keep company by choice with the professors of unbelief, or with such as disgrace professed belief with notorious iniquity. For in such cases it may be still asked, and who dare answer, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" No more can there be in one case than in the other. Light cannot be darkness, nor darkness light. So neither can the righteous and unrighteous have any community of feeling with each other. Christ can have none with Belial; nor Christians with such as have Satan for their God. See ch. 4. 4. The temple of God can have none with idols; nor we who are the temple of the living God, with such as make unto themselves idols of the vanities of earth. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Let the distinction of the Law between clean and unclean, remind us of the eternal difference between right and wrong. Let Christians avoid contact with sin. Let them come out from among sinners, and be separate.

But observe this applies to gross, manifest, notorious sins; to sinners whom no persuasion or remonstrances can convert, no discipline restrain or heal. The Corinthians had sinned grievously, but not hopelessly. And therefore they were not straitened in St. Paul. And observe further how great is our encouragement thus to renounce on due occasions our best loved friends, or expose ourselves to be renounced by them. God will receive us. He will dwell in us as in his temple, and walk in us. He will be a Father unto us. And we shall be his sons and daughters. What then would we more? What better can we conceive? What more high privilege, what more perfect happiness? God is enlarged to us. Let our hearts be enlarged, let our mouths be opened unto Him. Let us have fellowship with righteousness, communion with light, concord with Christ, agreement with God.

St. Paul comforted by the report of Titus.

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 I speak not *this* to condemn *you*: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*.

4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh

had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

§ 529. *Comfort in tribulation.*

There is nothing more remarkable in this Epistle than the intermixture of matters personal to the apostle and the Corinthians, with most affecting statements of Christian doctrines, and exhortations to Christian practice. The mind of the writer was evidently under the influence of highly excited feelings. He had been exceedingly grieved by the misconduct of those to whom he was writing. He had written his first Epistle to rebuke them in their offences, to make them sorry for their sins. He had been most anxious to hear how they received it. He had been kept a long time in suspense. At length he heard a satisfactory account. He heard that they were truly contrite. And now he writes to them the second time, in the fulness of his heart, earnestly desiring to soothe their sorrow for the present, and yet more earnestly desiring to minister to their salvation in the end. Meantime the Holy Spirit of God, using man's faculties and feelings as means for the revelation of God's will, so directs his thoughts, so controuls his expressions, as to pour forth out of his enlarged heart the most animating appeals to the consciences of us all.

The last point insisted on was God's merciful assurance, that He will be a Father unto those, who for his sake renounce the world, and all its lusts and vanities. Thereupon we are exhorted, out of regard to these promises, to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And then again the apostle recurs to the topic still uppermost in his thoughts, the renewal of a right mind, and kind regard, in the Corinthians towards himself. He prays them to receive him; as though he were still under the impression that they were averse. He declares that he had "wronged no man," "corrupted no man," "defrauded no man;" as though putting himself again in the situation of one accused, and desiring to give no offence in any thing. And yet he speaks not this to condemn the Corinthians. For his heart, as he had before signified, was full of tenderness towards them; ch. 6. 11; even so as that he could wish to live and die together. Now therefore he speaks freely, trusting in the renewal of their regard, he speaks freely even of their fault; not as judging or condemning, but as exhorting and edifying. Thus he glories in them greatly; he is filled with comfort, he is exceeding joyful, even in thinking of all his past tribulation. But how trying must that trouble have been to him! "Without were fightings, within were fears." The persecutions of the Jews and of the Gentiles were on one side. On the other was apprehension for the fidelity of the Christians. But God knoweth how to comfort those that are cast down. And God comforted him "by the coming of Titus." For Titus had himself taken comfort in the Corinthians, and had told of their "earnest desire, their mourning, their fervent mind" towards St. Paul. So that he rejoiced the more; even more than if he had not written, more than if he had never apprehended an ill reception of his letter, more than if the Corinthians had never behaved ill. And therefore he did not repent of having made them "sorry with a letter." Though for a while, after sending it, he had repented. He could have wished, out of his reluctance to give them pain, he could have wished that he had not sent it. But now he perceived that "the same epistle" had made them sorry only for a season. That is to say, he was now persuaded, that this sorrow would turn to their greater joy.

How lovely is the sympathy here expressed for the tears of genuine contrition! How heavenly the joy felt over the sinner that repents! How lively ought to be our concern for the recovery of them that are astray! How diligent our endeavours for ourselves to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord! The more precious are God's promises, let us the more fear lest we come short of them. The more perfect is his holiness, let us the more carefully "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." The more grievous is our conflict, let us the more entirely trust in the consolations of God, "that comforteth those that are cast down." The more we have been supported or forgiven, the more we have witnessed the conversion of our brethren, let us rejoice the more.

St. Paul's joy in the repentance of the Corinthians.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry *||* after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. *

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his

|| Or, according to God.

cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. *

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his * inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all *things*.

* Gr. bowels.

§ 530. *Repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.*

We have been told by our blessed Lord Himself, how great joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. See Luke 15. 7. And here St. Paul declares that he rejoiced in the repentance of the Corinthians. Nay, he wrote with this very view, not so much for the sake of one chief offender, nor for the sake of himself, who had suffered wrongfully, but in order to make manifest his concern in their behalf, that they should not fall away and perish. Therefore he was comforted in their comfort, in their contrition, which it gladdened his heart to hear of. "Yea, and exceedingly the more" he rejoiced "for the joy of Titus," for the gladness to which their amendment gave rise in the heart of his fellow labourer in the Lord. He felt justified in all he had said of them to Titus. He felt that Titus loved them the more heartily for the proofs they had given of obedience and fear. And he felt that henceforth, after this trial of their faith, after this their fall and recovery of grace, he could have confidence in them in all things.

What then is that sorrow which thus multiplies joy? What is that repentance which angels glory to behold, and which confirms the confidence, enlivens the affection, and exceedingly increases the comfort and rejoicing, of apostles, and of ministers of the Gospel? Surely they are not glad that men are sorry. Surely they rejoice not in our tears and sighs, in our strong crying, and groaning within ourselves, in our agony of shame and grief, of compunction, remorse, or despair. Far from it. Angels, and good men, and God who alone is truly good, are sorry that we have sorrow, regard with compassionate concern each pain we feel, each pang we undergo. But that we sorrow to repentance, that we are sorry after a godly manner, that our sorrow is not for damage but for gain, that it is not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation, repentance not to be repented of; this is matter of unfeigned joy in earth beneath, in heaven above, with men, with angels, and with God.

"Repentance unto salvation." It has to do with our deliverance from sin and death, with saving us from that wrath of God which is revealed against all unrighteousness of men, with bringing us to those joys which God has prepared for them that love Him. The tears we now shed for sin are fitting us for admittance to that state where we shall weep no more. The sorrow we now endure, if it be godly sorrow, is helpful in our preparation for that heaven where there is no sorrow. Repentance "not to be repented of." How unlike to what we commonly attempt to attain unto! How seldom do we so heartily repent, as not to be still haunted by the remembrance of our sins, not to weep for them again, not to have to count amongst the things to be repented of, the faintness, and feebleness, and faultiness, of our very repentance itself! So true it is in fact, that the best things we do have in them still somewhat that is amiss! So plainly is it set forth to us in Scripture, that we ought to be in all things perfect! Oh that we might so sorrow now, as never to weep again for the things which we have once repented of! Oh that God would blot out all our sins from his remembrance, and wipe away all tears from our eyes!

But sorrow, we must remember, is one thing, repentance is another. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." Let us see then how it "worketh." It works "carefulness." It makes us watchful against each renewed temptation, heedful that we neither fall nor stumble, that we neither in word, nor deed, nor thought, offend. It sets us upon clearing ourselves, not by making out that we have been right, but by pleading the merits of our Saviour. It raises in us indignation, yea, even against ourselves, that we should have offended our Father which is in heaven, dishonoured the Son our Saviour, grieved the Holy Spirit our Comforter. It fills us with fear, not, with selfish slavish terror, but with salutary apprehension of God's goodness, of his enmity against sin, fear of displeasing Him, fear coupled with "vehement desire," with earnest affection towards God, with "zeal" in his service, with "révenge" upon our sins and upon ourselves. Grant, Lord, that we may sorrow after this "godly sort!" Grant that our sorrow may work in us repentance! Grant that our repentance may be unto salvation! Grant that it may not need to be repented of!

St. Paul exhorteth to a contribution.

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For to *their power*, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their power they were willing* of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence,

and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be *forward* a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

|| Gr. *willing*.

§ 531. *Motives and rules for almsgiving.*

The Macedonians, when they made this collection, "were in a great trial of affliction." Yet they had "joy," even abundance of joy in giving. They were poor, in "deep poverty." Yet they were rich, even abundantly rich in liberality. The more therefore we are poor, let us the more abound in liberality. The more we are afflicted, let us have the more joy in giving. Again, they gave "to their power," "yea, and beyond their power." Let us therefore give to the full amount of our ability, yea beyond what we seem able to spare. They were "willing of themselves." Let us give unasked. They prayed the apostle with much entreaty that he would receive the gift. Let us ask to give. Let us press our alms upon those who have it in charge to minister to the necessities of the saints. Let us be at least as eager to relieve the wants of the poor as the poor are to receive our help. "And this they did," beyond what the apostle had expected, even first giving their own selves to the Lord, and submitting themselves to St. Paul, according to the will of God. Let us then give to man, because we are devoted to God; because we are bent upon fulfilling his will; because we submit ourselves to the direction of his ministers.

But the forwardness of others is not the only motive by which the duty of liberality is here pressed on the Corinthians. They are reminded, that as they abound in other gifts, they must abound in this grace also. If then we count that we have "faith," if we find that we have "utterance," if we trust that we have "knowledge," "diligence," or "love," let us so much the more abound in the grace of almsgiving. Again they are told that this is not spoken "by commandment." It is not imposed on them as a tribute of necessity, but recommended as an offering of love. It is put to them to prove the sincerity of their love. Let us then love not in word only, but in deed. Let us do according to what we profess to feel. Let us give of what we like to use ourselves. Let us give not grudgingly, or of necessity, but freely, cheerfully, affectionately. And especially let us give out of regard to "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," out of our thankful remembrance of his inestimable gift; knowing that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Oh, what is worldly wealth, that we should set it in comparison against treasure in heaven? What is money, that we should grudge to give it, when Christ left for our sakes the glory of the Father, became man, and as man expended for us his life upon the cross? Ought we not to be willing to impoverish ourselves, in order to help our poorer brethren? Ought we not to value such riches as we have, only as they are the means of making others rich, only as they help ourselves towards treasure in heaven?

St. Paul speaks not to the Corinthians in the way of commandment, but gives herein his advice. He appeals to their consciences. He would work upon their inclinations. For he would not use, in the matter of alms, his apostolical authority, lest the chief value of the almsgiving should be lost, the "willing mind." This they had felt, he reminds them, a year back; when they had "begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward," not only to contribute, but to feel eagerness in contributing. And yet it appears their willingness had flagged, their "readiness to will" had not led to a "performance also," out of that which they had. As the gift is vain without the willingness; so the willingness is also vain without the gift. The willingness can be proved only by the gift. And yet it is not measured by the amount of what is given. Nay the amount given is measured by the willingness. "It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Let us but give according to our ability; let him that has much give much, and he that has little, let him do his best to give of that little; and behold, "it is accepted." God, to whom all belongs, God, to whom we owe all we have to give, God accepts it as though it were ours, not his; God accepts through Christ our unworthy alms, nay He accepts us also ourselves, through Christ.

St. Paul provideth for honest things in the sight of men.

13 For *I* mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, ¹ He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

16 But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this || grace, which

is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration* of your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which ^{*} *I have* in you.

23 Whether *any do inquire* of Titus, *he is my* partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren *be inquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

¹ Exod. 16. 18.

|| Or, gift.

^{*} Or, he hath.

§ 532. *That we cannot have all things in common.*

We read of the first couverts at Jerusalem that they had all things in common. See Acts 2. 44. This came of an indifference to the present world, and of an ardent attachment towards each other, such as could only be expected when first the light of God's glorious Gospel shone forth; and whilst yet it had the support of miracles. And accordingly, the Epistles are full of passages which imply, that the distinction between rich and poor would still prevail in the Christian church. And the equality which they seek to establish, is neither an equal division of property, nor a common fund instead of any property at all, but the supply of the wants of some out of the abundance of others, by means of alms given freely, largely, cheerfully. And in this it is not meant that one part should be burdened whilst the other is eased, or that any should give according to that he hath not. See ver. 12. For he that gives so wastefully as to bring himself to want, deprives himself of the means of giving for the future. And this would be the one chief difficulty in a common fund, that the property of the whole community would be likely to be exhausted. Nay their having had all things in common, is probably one reason why the saints at Jerusalem were so soon in a condition of want.

Were it indeed attainable for all to be in earnest, for all to believe heartily, all to love sincerely, then it might be desirable for all to have one purse, for none to want, and none to give, for none to be poor, and none to have riches. If all were honest, and none selfish, if all were diligent as serving the Lord, and none disposed to go beyond or defraud his brother in any thing, if all were content with shelter, food, and clothing, and none wish to have these things finer than their brethren, then what could be conceived more delightful upon earth, than to be rid of all the ills that spring from love of money, to run no risk of becoming covetous as riches increase, or of murmuring when they make themselves wings and fly away. No prisons need there be then for them that rob, no judgment for them that wrong; no bars on our doors, nor locks on our coffers, to form at once a protection to our property, and a reproach on our fellow creatures. Can we wonder that a prospect so agreeable has tempted some to try to make it a reality? Can we wonder that seeing it was the practice of the first Christian church at Jerusalem, some have thought that it ought to be the aim of all Christian churches always?

But how differently the apostle proposed to make equality! See how carefully he provided for honest things, "not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Forward as Titus was in the cause, St. Paul sent with him "the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches," who was also chosen by the churches for this office. He did this to avoid the risk of being suspected, the possibility of being accused, in the administration of this abundance. Nay he sent with them another brother, whom he had often proved diligent, but whose name as well as that of the first mentioned is now lost. So short lived is the note of honour amongst men! So perishable is even the praise of all the churches, when compared with the everlasting commendation of God! All these St. Paul sent together, and with them a short character or introduction of each; of Titus, that he was his own partner and fellow helper; of the rest, that they were the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ; all this did St. Paul, for the better security of whatsoever alms the Corinthians might contribute, in proof of their love, and in confirmation of his boasting in their behalf. We are not therefore allowed to trifle with the rights of property. We must hold sacred what is committed to our charge for the good of others. And we must preserve what is our own, for the greater advantage of those who have none. Thus only, as long as Christians are but few amongst mankind, and few also amongst professors of Christianity, thus only can we approach unto equality; not for no one to have much, and no one little, but for him that has much to have nothing over, and for him that has little to have no lack. See Exod. 16. 18.

Touching the ministering to the saints.

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

* Gr. blessing.

|| Or, which hath been so much spoken of before.

¹ Prov. 11. 25. Rom. 12. 8. Eccles. 35. 9.

§ 533. *The right way and happy fruit of giving.*

St. Paul had written at some length, and had yet more to say, "touching the ministering to the saints." In the midst therefore of his subject, he expresses his conviction that this topic was superfluous in writing to the Corinthians. That is to say, he teaches them what they ought to be, forward in their minds to give, by expressing himself satisfied that they were so already. And he tells them that he not only thus praised them to themselves, but had given them this character with "them of Macedonia," had told the Macedonians, that "Achaia," of which Corinth was a part, "was ready a year ago." Nay, he added that this report of their zeal had stirred up many. Sometimes he was compelled to censure. But how much more ready does he shew himself to commend! Sometimes, as an apostle, it was his duty to judge. But how gladly does he seek occasion to judge favourably; to hope all things, to believe all things! See 1 Cor. 13. 7. And most effectual is this method of persuading to do right, the method of praise and encouragement, and charitable hope. Is it not thus that God has dealt with mankind through Christ? Does He not count us just though sinners? And is not the sense of our being counted righteous, the most powerful of all motives for us to sin no more? Oh that we would more often try this method, in our treatment of each other! Oh that instead of censuring so sharply what is wrong, we would kindly commend what is right! Oh that we would search not for faults but for excellence, praise it where we find it, and as far as possible suppose it, hope it, reckon on it, even where we fear that it is not!

"Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready." This shews that the apostle knew there was still room for admonition, still need of exhortation. And the mention of this risk of their backwardness, in the same breath with the praise before expressed, shews that in that praise there was no flattery, no intent to deceive, no design to allow them in self-deceit; but only a kind and most effectual declaration of the frame of mind they ought to have arrived at. And now when the reverse is supposed possible, how gently is the possibility expressed. How tenderly is it hinted, "lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting." Therefore the apostle sent on the brethren before he came himself, "that the same might be ready," the bounty of which he had made boast, that it might be ready "as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness;" as a gift given, not as a debt paid; not as a hard bargain, but as a free will offering. Sad it would have been indeed, if those who had been provoked by tidings of the zeal of the Corinthians, should have come and found them backward. And will it not be yet more sad, if we who have been counted righteous, should be in the end condemned as sinners? Shall we not be overwhelmed with unutterable shame, if after taking to ourselves the name of Christ, reckoning on the privileges of Christians, and being reckoned to have died unto sin, and to be alive again unto righteousness, it should be proved before men and angels that we are "unprepared;" that we can give unto our Lord no account of our stewardship?

In no one duty will a more strict account be taken than in this of giving alms. No one grace is more frequently insisted on, more largely explained, more powerfully enforced, in the Gospel of our Saviour, than this of ministering to the saints, of doing good "unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. 6. 10. And no where is the right way, and happy fruit, of giving alms, more clearly set down than here. We must give as we purpose in our hearts; not as the world calculates, not, as we are often tempted, cutting short our bounty, when we come to determine the amount; not grudgingly, or of necessity, as if we would save it if we could; but according to the intention formed in the heart, under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, cheerfully, as if we had rather give than not; as being glad to give, glad to be asked to give, thankful to be able to give, and willing to give beyond our ability. And for the result, in the one case we shall reap sparingly, in the other we shall reap bountifully. In the one case it is not said that God hateth us; but in the other it is said that "God loveth a cheerful giver." Our gifts give us the assurance of his love. We gain more, how much more, than we bestow. Nay the more we bestow, we gain the more.

Further motives to almsgiving.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, ¹ He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ²ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountiful-

ness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.
12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

¹ Ps. 112. 9.

² Is. 55. 10.

§ 534. *Almsgiving promotes thanksgiving.*

We have here some further considerations, of great weight, brought forward to enforce the duty of giving alms. One is, that God is able to make his gifts abound to them that give. He can bring it to pass, that whilst they "abound to every good work," they shall themselves also have "all sufficiency in all things." And so it is said in the Scriptures, in the Old Testament, of them that disperse abroad and give unto the poor, that their righteousness remaineth for ever. See Ps. 112. 9. Their giving much, does not exhaust their means of giving. Their store is replenished, and they are righteous still. To the servant who is found faithful in a few things, the Lord commits the charge of many things; allowing him still sufficiency for himself whilst here, and welcoming him in the end with those gracious words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matt. 25. 21. Such is God's usual method of proceeding, in the distribution of riches upon earth. Such is his universal rule, in awarding treasure in heaven. Even as out of the harvest of the year, He provides for us both bread to eat, and enough to spare for seed, so does He take care, for those who sow abundant alms, that their seed shall be multiplied, that the fruits of their righteousness shall be increased, that they shall still have more to use, and more to give. There may be sometimes a year of scarcity. The bountiful may sometimes come to want. But God "is able," and usually does enrich them in every thing, in all bountifulness. There may be sometimes dearth in the land of plenty. But which will the wise husbandman even then first think of, bread for the present, or seed for the future? Will he not lay by the best for the time of sowing, and in the meanwhile make the refuse serve for his support? Let us likewise for ourselves be content with little, that we may have much to give, much to lend unto the Lord, much to sow in that field of bountifulness, "which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

And this is the second motive here insisted on; that the "administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints," that our alms not only bless those who partake of them, and not only return with tenfold blessing upon ourselves, but that they are "abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;" they make many others, even those who know of them, express their thankfulness to the Lord. Men judge of our religion by its practical effects. In them that profess subjection to the Gospel of Christ, they look to find obedience to his commands. And if they find us liberal in our distribution to all men, they are inclined to glorify God, for our faith and love. If they have been themselves indifferent to the Gospel, they are more likely to believe and to obey. Or if they have been faithful and obedient, they give thanks for us, and pray for us, and long after us, by reason of this great grace of God, manifest in our lives. Thus the more we give, the more cheerfully, the more devoutly, the more we manifest in our giving an anxiety to do good to all men, and a regard to the will of God, indifference to our own personal enjoyments, and earnest desire after treasure in heaven, we shall the more largely help in turning the hearts of many to "subjection unto the gospel of Christ." We shall awaken that attention to the things of eternity, which is most needful for the lovers of this present world. We shall enliven that love of God and of each other, that affectionate longing after God's grace and each other's eternal welfare, which is the glory of them that love their Lord.

"Thanks be" therefore "unto God for his unspeakable gift." Thanks be to Him for giving us the grace to give! Thanks be to Him for giving to the rich this use for their riches, and to the poor this relief in their wants! Thanks be to Him for counting all to have attained this grace, not according to the amount of their means, but according to the willingness of their mind! Thanks be to Him for moving us to attain to it, by the abundance of his own great grace! Thanks be to the Father for the gift of his own Son to die for us! Thanks be to the Son who gave Himself! Thanks be to the Holy Ghost, who gives help and comfort!
"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

Of the apostolical authority.

1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who || in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you :

2 But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I *am* present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which * think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh :

4 (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty † through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down ‡ imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ;

|| Or, in outward appearance.

* Or, reckon.

† Or, to God.

‡ Or, reasonings.

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed :

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will* we be also in deed when we are present.

§ 535. *The authority of Christian ministers.*

The pretensions of false teachers in the church at Corinth, their factious proceedings, and personal enmity to St. Paul, forced him both to speak much of himself, and to say much of the authority which the Lord had given him. Hence we may derive profitable instruction, as to the authority of Christian ministers, the ground on which it stands, the manner in which it ought to be exercised, and the temper in which it ought to be submitted to. If St. Paul beseeches the Corinthians, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, it follows that in this temper ministers must proceed; endeavouring to persuade by such meek and gentle language, as they might conceive that Christ Himself would use. If he was bold towards them when absent, though counted vile when present, this shews that however ministers may be slighted by their people, they must not be afraid either to tell them the truth, or to apply to them the discipline of the church. If on the other hand, he beseeches them, that he may have no need when present to use such boldness as he expected, this shews that they who would walk in his steps, ought to be sorry to have to exercise severity, ought to prevent when possible the necessity of harsh measures, by the prudent use of such as are gentle.

Next observe what was the nature of those means of correction, which the apostle expected to apply. He had been accused of walking "according to the flesh." He answers, "though we walk in the flesh," though we live in the body, "we do not war after the flesh," we do not use either worldly wisdom or worldly force, towards gaining the victory at which we aim. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." James 1. 20. The means of our warfare are not swords, nor imprisonment, nor destroying flames, but the revelation of God's wrath against sin, the proclamation of his pardon unto sinners. These "through God," and not through the strength of man, are mighty to pull down strong holds, to demolish self deceit and pride, and to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." These then, and such as these, are the weapons with which ministers must contend against the iniquity of the world. And as the apostle was ready to revenge all disobedience, when as many had obeyed as could be won by kindness, so it would be well if there were power in the church to daunt by the infliction of spiritual censures those obstinate offenders, who cannot be won by exhortation. But such power must be used, as St. Paul used his, for edification, not for destruction. If as an apostle he was authorized in extreme cases to deliver offenders unto Satan, to sentence them to grievous bodily sufferings, and to great shame and anguish of mind, this was in order that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord. See 1 Cor. 5. 5. And so must ministers use reproof or correction, not with a view to crush the wounded spirit. If they wound, it must be with a view to heal. If they bring low, it must be in order to exalt.

Nor need they be ashamed, on due occasions, to boast of their authority, to declare it plainly, to maintain it firmly, to appeal from outward appearance to the appointment of Christ, and on the strength of that appointment, to enforce respect to whatever they are constrained to order. For neither was the apostle ashamed to boast of his authority, nor would he allow it to be thought that he threatened in his Epistle what he was not intending to perform, nor would he leave any room for saying that his letters were weighty but his presence weak, nor would he fail to prove, that such as he was in word when absent, he would be in deed when present. Like to this then should be the rule of Christian ministers, firm though gentle, resolute though meek; consisting not in words only, but in deeds; not in threats, but in performance. Oh where do we now find vestiges of this power in the church? Oh where do we now meet with this disposition, to obey them that have the rule over us, and submit ourselves, even as to them that watch for our souls? See Heb. 13. 17.

God grant unto his people that they may no longer neglect either this or any other profitable means, for having every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ Jesus !

St. Paul boasteth not beyond his measure.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, || are not wise.

13 But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the * rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come

as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that* is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be † enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

16 To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, and not to boast in another man's ‡ line of things made ready to our hand.

17 ¹ But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

|| Or, *understand* it not.

* Or, *line*.

† Or, *magnified* in you.

‡ Or, *rule*.

¹ Jer. 9. 24. 1 Cor. 1. 31.

§ 536. *That we must not commend ourselves.*

“Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.” Prov. 26. 12. This is the sentence of Solomon on self conceit. And like to this is the judgment here delivered by St. Paul, concerning some that commend themselves. “They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” There is more hope of fools than of them. Fools may perhaps be sensible of their folly. Fools may be willing to learn, anxious to improve, thankful for correction, admonition, and instruction. This at least is often the case with such as Solomon here means by the word fool, one who has little natural ability. And compared with such as these, how little hope can be entertained for them that are self conceited! They measure themselves by themselves. They take not into their account the ability, or importance, of any one, besides themselves. Their own opinion, their own attainments, their own extent of usefulness, is the standard by which they judge the value of their brethren, nay, by which they try their own. They compare themselves “among themselves,” and among themselves only. They look not out to see how many are more able, more excellent. They conceive not how few they are, compared with all, how trifling each single man must be, however great he may fancy his importance, when weighed against the countless inhabitants of the earth; or what a trifle is the earth when contrasted with the universe, or what a speck in space is the universe itself, or what a point the whole duration of all things, in the reckoning of Him who abideth in eternity, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. See 2 Chron. 6. 18.

St. Paul, though he had occasion to speak of himself in a way that might seem much like boasting, protests against being taken for self conceited. And the lively picture which he has drawn of self conceit, shews how fully he was sensible of its folly, how far he was from being likely to fall into it. And further, he points out the distinction between boasting such as his, and self commendation. He boasted not of things without measure; “but according to the measure of the rule,” which God had given him. His commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles included the Corinthians. He measured himself not by himself, but by the line laid out for him from on high. He boasted not “of other men's labours,” but asserted his authority in a church planted by himself. And he trusted that he should be still within the rule marked out by God, and not encroaching on any other man's line, if after the faith of the Corinthians was increased, he should extend further his labours and authority; even be enlarged by them abundantly, enabled, when they no longer needed his attention, to preach the Gospel in many other places.

“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” This makes all the difference between vain boasting, and profitable declaration of authority. If we speak within our measure, within the rule set to us by God, we may safely speak in the same tone as the apostle. If we refer all the praise to God, we may speak as he did, on due occasions, where there is the same necessity, or the like advantage, concerning such service as we are enabled to render to the church. For this is commending God, and not ourselves. This is not boasting of ourselves, but of Him. And to praise Him should be at all times our delight. Whereas for ourselves it is all vanity to praise ourselves. We must wait for that praise which comes from Him. “For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.” How idle then to talk as some do of their own exertions, successes, influence, or worth! How foolish to talk as many do continually of themselves! How worse than foolish to grudge the praise of others, lest it should interfere with our own! Let us set our hearts on the praise of God. Let us desire to do that which is acceptable to Him. And let us remember hat it is one plain point in his will concerning us, that we should not commend ourselves.

St. Paul is forced to commend himself.

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed || bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very

chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

|| Or, ye do bear with me.

§ 537. *What boasting is allowable.*

The necessity of justifying his conduct forces from St. Paul this further reference to himself, "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me." As if he had said, It is for your good I speak. I say that which seems at first like foolishness, and which my enemies will represent as foolish. I run the risk of being accounted for a fool. I do violence to my feelings in speaking of myself. All this I do, because for you it is expedient, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy." I feel a lively apprehension lest any should seduce your affections. I have gained them, by great pains, and many anxious prayers. I have gained them not for myself, but for the Lord. "I have espoused you to one husband;" for this end, "that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," as "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Eph. 5. 27. But how can this be done, if "your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ?" if you listen to strange teachers of strange doctrines, if you be beguiled, as Eve was by the serpent, so as not to obey the will of God, so as to count yourselves wise, and me foolish, so as to believe these ill reports of one who is your father in Christ Jesus? Had indeed these new comers told you of "another Jesus," had they imparted to you another Holy Ghost, or had they informed you of another Gospel, beyond what I have preached, and alike fitted to forward you in holiness on earth, and to bring you to heaven in the end; then you might well bear with them. But this is not the case. For "I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." From me you received the true Gospel, the whole Gospel, the only Gospel. However plain may have been my language, I have not been wanting, thanks be to God who supplied me, I have not been wanting in knowledge of the truth. "We have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things." The chief fault it seems objected to me is this, that I abased myself in preaching "to you the gospel of God freely." But did I not this thing on purpose to make my ministry more acceptable, "that ye might be exalted?" For this end "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them," receiving from them payment for my labours in the Gospel, "to do you service." "When I was present with you, and wanted," when the labour of my hands during such time as I could spare from preaching did not yield enough for my support, I put none of you to any charge, but was supplied by the brethren from Philippi in Macedonia. See Phil. 4. 15. Thus "in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." Whatever construction may be put upon my conduct, I adopt it, and I will persevere in it, for your good. Whatever censure I may incur for boasting of it, I boast in order to prevent you from being led into mistakes, prejudiced against the Gospel by what has been said against me, corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

How seldom do we hear men speak about themselves, out of such regard as this to the salvation of their brethren! How seldom can our boasting be justified, by anxiety to save each other from mischievous delusion. How few feel this godly jealousy for their fellow Christians, that they should be without spot or wrinkle presented unto the Lord! How few feel any such anxiety for themselves, that their own minds may not be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ! Well might we bear with each other's folly, if it were the foolishness of caring for each other's souls! Well might we be content to be counted fools ourselves, if it were for labouring by all means in our power to save our neighbours, and to escape from the wrath to come! Oh that we may be thus foolish, as the world counts foolishness, and wise in the esteem of God! Oh that we may thus boast, as the apostle boasted, even boast and glory in the Lord!

St. Paul is resolved to glory.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, *no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if

otherwise, yet as a fool || receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing *ye yourselves* are wise.

20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour *you*, if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

* Gr. *this boasting shall not be stopped in me.*

|| Or, *suffer.*

§ 538. *We ought to suffer fools gladly.*

St. Paul had answered the objection made against him, of preaching the Gospel freely to the Corinthians, asking whether it was an offence to abase himself, in order for them to be exalted. He now adds that "no man shall stop" him "of this boasting in the regions of Achaia," in the church and neighbourhood of Corinth. Not because he loved them *not*. On the contrary, because he loved them. And for this he appeals most solemnly to God, "God knoweth." And in like manner he confirms by the solemnity of an oath what he had said of not being stopped in this boasting, "As the truth of Christ is in me." And so afterwards he adds, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not." ver. 31. See then what is a fit occasion for an oath. When an apostle would save a church from gross delusion, when a minister would devote himself to the service of the church, when any Christian would give weight to an assertion that is needful for the eternal welfare of his brethren. How different are these ends and objects from such as commonly are made occasion of our appealing unto God! How much it is to be feared, that in swearing for so many trifles of mere worldly business, we become guilty of taking God's name in vain, and offend against the commandment of our Saviour, "Swear not at all!" Matt. 5. 34.

The apostle persisted in preaching the Gospel without cost to the Corinthians, in order to expose the pretensions of their false teachers, that they might be compelled, as they professed, to make no profit by their preaching. For these were false apostles; and it was necessary to expose their falsehood. And if they were such thus early, no wonder that ever since, up to the present day, there have been ministers of Satan, pretending to be ministers of righteousness: even as Satan also himself "is transformed into an angel of light," puts on, in tempting man, the garb of innocency, and quotes Scripture, as he did unto our Lord. See Matt. 4. 6. We see then how such pretenders are to be put to shame by true ministers; not only by the excellency of their doctrine, but by the holiness of their lives. To deny themselves, to refrain from the full enjoyment of their rights, to prove themselves the very reverse of mercenary, to persevere through evil report as well as good report, in thus labouring for the salvation of their people; this is the way "to cut off occasion from them which desire occasion." Would that ministers and members of our church would try this method of healing our divisions! Would that we were all willing to be counted foolish, to be accused of boasting, or speaking not after the Lord, to submit to reproach as though we were weak, or to force ourselves against our wishes to be bold, if by any means we might expose false pretensions, deliver our brethren from false doctrine, and put to shame those "deceitful workers" "whose end shall be according to their works."

"For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise." The Corinthians who thought highly of their wisdom, suffered themselves to be imposed upon by false teachers, submitted to be brought into spiritual bondage, to have their substance devoured, to be treated with violence and scorn. If then, the apostle argues, if you thus bear with the foolishness of others, why not bear with mine also? If you choose to count me foolish, "yet as a fool receive me." I will speak, if you please so to consider it, "not after the Lord." Reproach me how you will, call me weak, or call me bold, I will say that which is needful for your instruction, "I will glory also." If the apostle thus submitted to undeserved reproach, how much more cheerfully, if possible, ought we, who deserve the worst that can be said of us! If the Corinthians, in their ignorance, could thus "suffer fools," how much more ought we to view it as a part of real wisdom, to bear patiently the oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's haughtiness, the rude man's blows! What folly can be more manifest than theirs, who do wrong for their own pleasure whilst they live, without regard to what must befall them when they die? What wisdom is more heavenly than this, gladly to put up with the ills we meet with on earth, in hope of the great glory which we expect in heaven, through the merits of our Saviour Christ?

The labours, and perils, and sufferings of St. Paul.

22 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I *forty stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by *mine own* countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

¹ Deut. 25. 3.

§ 539. *That we must be content to be meanly esteemed.*

How sad is the perversity of very many, that whilst they suffer gladly the oppression of false teachers, they listen greedily to any tales that they can hear of against true ministers of the Gospel! Must not this arise from that bitter enmity, which lurks in the natural heart of man, against the truth revealed by God? Must it not be owing to our pride which resists authority; to our selfishness which inclines us to take what we choose ourselves, in preference to what has been chosen for us; to our wrathfulness which makes us fond of strife; to our deceitfulness which makes us glory in a lie? How else can we account for it, that so many gross delusions have prevailed amongst mankind, under the colour of religion? How else can we conceive, that the Corinthians could prefer the false teachers to St Paul, or believe against the apostle the false tales here alluded to?

He is forced to assure them, as if the matter were in doubt, that he is an Hebrew, an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham. He is forced to insist upon it, that he is a minister of Christ. He is forced to tell them of his labours, and his stripes, and of his frequent exposure to imprisonment and death. Thankful we ought to feel for the testimony thus borne to the certainty of the things we have believed. Five times he received of the Jews as many stripes as they were accustomed to inflict. Thrice he was beaten with rods, a punishment of the Romans. Once he was stoned, thrice shipwrecked, a night and a day he spent in the deep. Add to this the toil of his perpetual journeying; the perils of waters, in crossing lakes and rivers then rarely supplied with safe conveyance; the perils of robbers, then commonly infesting the track of travellers; the perils by his own countrymen, so painful an aggravation of what he endured from perils by the heathen. Add perils in the city, in the wilderness, and in the sea, and, above all, add the perils of false brethren. And thus some notion may be formed of the kind of life which St. Paul went through. How great must have been his weariness and pain! How frequent and severe his watchings, his fastings, his hunger and thirst, his cold and nakedness! How weighty the anxiety which, besides all these outward troubles, was daily pressing on his mind, "the care of all the churches;" the sympathy of his lively affections for the weakness of the weak, for the offences of them that fell! And is this the life which our heavenly Father provides for such as are chosen vessels for his work? How different from a life of ease, and sloth, and luxury! How different from a life of worldly business, or of worldly pleasure! How different from the glorying of the worldly and the vain, is St. Paul's glorying of the things which concern his infirmities, of his shame for them that were offended, of his tenderness of affection for the infirm! Oh that we may boast of nothing but of God's great power, made manifest in our great weakness! Oh that we may shrink from no suffering or toil, from no danger of body or agony of mind, that may serve to make us like unto the apostle, that may minister to the glory of the Lord!

Nor must we brave only those perils, or endure only those pains, which are likely to obtain for us the admiration of the world, the repute of being generous and brave, the name of hero or of martyr. We must be content to put up also with scorn and ridicule. We must be willing, on an occasion of necessity, to appear in a mean position, to be abased before men, to be represented on the page of history, not as heroes, but as fugitives; not as one of the noble army of martyrs, but as one that was let "through a window in a basket," "down by the wall." How plainly does St. Paul's mention of this humiliating event, as the worldly wise esteem it, shew that in all he had been saying of himself, he has no wish to magnify his own importance! How powerfully should it constrain us, not to magnify ourselves! How forcibly should it teach us, that there is nothing truly great but what is good; and that there is nothing truly conducive to God's honour, to the furtherance of the Gospel, to the salvation of souls, which is not also at the same time truly great, truly noble, honourable, memorable!

St. Paul cometh to visions.

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven,

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he

seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

|| Or, possible.

¹ See Ezek. 28. 24.

§ 540. *Grace sufficient.*

"To glory" was not expedient for St. Paul. It was painful to his feelings; it was perilous to his humanity. It was sure to bring on him the reproach of being boastful. But though not expedient for himself, it was good for the Corinthians. And therefore, besides all that he had said already, he went on "to visions and revelations of the Lord."

"I knew a man in Christ," thus reluctantly, thus modestly, does the apostle speak, when he has to tell how he was caught up, whether in the body or without it he could not say, into the third heaven, into the heaven of heavens, into the light which cannot be approached, into the presence of Him who dwells therein. And again, "I knew such a man," is the way he describes himself, when he was "caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words," which it was not possible for him now to repeat. "Of such an one will I glory," not of himself, as himself, but as of another self, even as of Christ that dwelt in him, see 1 Tim. 1. 14, even as of "a man in Christ;" of his infirmities, of his own self, all feeble as he was, made mighty by the help of God. Else if he had desired to glory, he would not have been therein "a fool," as the Corinthians supposed. For he would have spoken "the truth." But he forbore to say many things which he might have said truly, lest men should form their judgment of him from what he said, and not from what he was seen and heard to do. Of these visions and revelations he therefore says no more. He had said enough to confirm his character with those to whom he wrote. He had said enough to convey to us the impression, that he had seen what no eye of flesh can see, that he had been where no man can be and live. There is then another life. There is another world. There is a paradise, though where we know not. There is a heaven, though what we cannot conceive. There is a God, though we can neither view the greatness of his glory, nor imagine the abundance of his love. The more we long to see Him as He is, He will the more make Himself manifest to our souls.

And see how great is our risk, in the midst of highest privileges, lest we fall the grievous fall of them that exalt themselves. See how St. Paul was not considered safe from being "exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations!" See how there was given to him, most precious gift of God, that which saves from falling them that are most high, "a thorn in the flesh," some sore trial of the soul arising from the body; "the messenger of Satan," who designed to buffet him, but was made to help towards his humility, and peace, and joy! Have we any such humiliating affliction? Have we any bodily infirmity, which weighs on our own spirits, and exposes us to the reproach of the scornful? Have we any unseen passion troubling us at heart, struggling for the mastery over faith and love, and striving to lay us low at Satan's feet? And do we pray earnestly and repeatedly, that this thing might depart from us? How then, we perhaps ask in doubt or wonder, how is it that we are still thus troubled? Let us hear the answer of the Lord, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is enough for thee to have the victory. Be content to be still at war. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." This conflict is for the exercise of thy faith. The more thou art sensible of thy infirmity, the more thou believest in my ability to help, thou art so much the nearer to being strong in Me. Who then would not glory in infirmities, if thereby the power of Christ might rest upon us? Who would not take pleasure in what we suffer here, whether by conflicts within, or by wrongs without, if in all our distress and weakness we are making progress towards strength and joy?

God grant that in our afflictions we may resort to prayer! God give us in all we pray for, what is best for us to have! God keep us humble, whilst we dwell on earth! God exalt us when we die, to glory everlasting!

St. Paul concludeth his defence of himself.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for * you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless,

being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

* Gr. your souls.

§ 541. *That we should have at heart the spiritual welfare of others.*

One other reason is here assigned by St. Paul for the pains he takes to justify himself. "Ye have compelled me." It was the Corinthians' own fault. "For I ought to have been commended of you." It was their duty to have maintained his cause, to have defended his character, and to have testified to his apostolical authority. And for lack of their doing so, he was forced to say of himself at the very time when he felt himself to be nothing, that he was in nothing "behind the very chiefest apostles." How unwelcome this necessity was to him he has abundantly made manifest! How wrong then it was in them to bring this trouble upon him; when it was so true, and ought by them to have been testified so cheerfully, that all the signs of an apostle were wrought among them! Let us be ready therefore to defend the cause of our brethren, that we may relieve them from the task of justifying themselves. Let us be forward to commend those who are most loudly censured, in whatsoever we can commend them truly.

The signs of an apostle had been wrought among the Corinthians by St. Paul. How could they then bear to hear him called in question, whether indeed he were an apostle? See 1 Cor. 9. 1. How could they construe it as a wrong done to them, that he had not been burdensome? How could they fail to sink under the sense of shame, when they received his affecting prayer, "forgive me this wrong?" If it be wrong, forgive it; if right, impute it not for wrong. "If I have spoken evil," said our Lord, in a like case, "bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" John 18. 23. "Behold," adds St. Paul, "the third time I am ready to come to you;" having once lately failed in his intention. "And I will not be burdensome to you." I am persuaded that this course is right, and therefore will persist in it. "For I seek not your's but you;" not your goods, but the salvation of your souls, your selves. Even as children lay not up for parents, but parents for children, so would I, your spiritual father, work for you, and not you for me. "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." I will spend my substance, and be spent myself; even though whilst I thus greatly love you, I am beloved but little in return. Oh how bitter is this sorrow to our hearts by nature, to be hated of those we love! Oh how sweet is this affection to the soul, through grace, to love those who love not us!

"But be it so, I did not burden you" myself; granting this, still my enemies will say that I have abstained through craftiness, designing to make more gain of you, by means of others, whom I sent unto you. Was this the case with Titus, whom I sent, or with the brother whom I sent with him? Did not these all manifest the same spirit, walk in the same steps, as myself? Thus the apostle appeals to facts. Thus he convinces the Corinthians by their own experience. Thus he patiently refutes every slander they had heard of, nay every objection he could conceive. And why? To excuse himself to them? For no such object. "We speak before God in Christ." He spake for God's glory. He justified himself out of regard to the Gospel of Christ. "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying." He had their spiritual welfare at heart in all. In their estranged condition he felt them to be still dearly beloved. He was alarmed lest when he came he should not find them such as he would. He feared lest he should therefore be found unto them such as they would not. He apprehended the many ills with which division is accompanied, "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." And he feared, lest if he humbled not himself, by thus deigning to justify his own authority, he feared lest God would humble him among them, by giving them up, as He had already, to their former sins, and to what was worse, an impenitent mind. What ought more to grieve and humble a pastor, than the sins of Christ's people committed to his charge? What ought more to weigh with the people to repent, than the labours of their ministers who are over them in the Lord?

St. Paul declareth that he will not spare.

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to youward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak || in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves,

how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection.

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

|| Or, *with him.*

§ 542. *How we ought to prove our own selves.*

The terror of the Lord is revealed for the persuasion of men. It was represented in the primitive church, by the power which the apostle exercised to deliver over offenders to Satan. This power we see was given to them for edification and not for destruction. And when St. Paul would most plainly assert his authority, he takes care at the same time to add, that he wrote these things whilst absent, on purpose to prevent the necessity of using sharpness when he should be present. For "the third time" he was fully purposing to come to them. And as his purpose had once failed, this would be "the second time" of his coming, if he came. And he forewarned them that on this occasion he would bring every charge to proof, he would not spare. He would give a proof of Christ speaking in him, by manifestation of Christ's power, punishing at his word; a proof not weak but mighty. For though Christ "was crucified through weakness," being made in fashion as a man, and submitting to be crucified by the strength of men; "yet he liveth by the power of God;" He is now alive. And so the apostle also, though appearing as He did weak, would prove living and powerful towards them, through God. Therefore he exhorted them to examine themselves, whether they were in the faith, to prove their own selves, to try whether Jesus Christ were in them; which He must be unless they were reprobates. He trusted that they would in themselves find proof, that he at least had been approved of God, in the faithfulness of his ministry among them. He prayed God that they might prove guiltless; not so much for the justifying of his ministry, as for their own sakes, whatever judgment they might form of him. For he could do nothing, as an apostle, against the truth; and therefore needed not their testimony for his approving. And he was glad when they were strong, though counted weak himself; and in all he wrote, and said, and did, and in all he designed to do when he should arrive, he wished only their perfection.

This is the way in which the apostle would exercise his authority, to edification, and not to destruction. This is the way in which we find all the terrors of the Lord revealed in Scripture against sin, for the persuasion, and correction, and salvation, of the sinner. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." We shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, in the presence of saints and angels, confronted with those who have beheld our wickedness. Christ has foretold us, that when He comes the second time He will not spare. He prays us, and prays in our behalf, that we do no evil. He was content to be numbered with the transgressors, in order for us to be counted righteous. He was glad to become weak, that we might be made strong.* And this also He wishes, our perfection. He writes then these things against us in his absence, on purpose that when present He may not have to use sharpness. He would have us know of his judgments, that we may be able to avoid them. He reveals the wrath to come in order for us to flee and to escape it.

Let us then now examine ourselves, are we in the faith? Do we believe no other things than those which Moses and the prophets, and Jesus Christ, and his apostles, have taught? Are we believing all that they have revealed for us to believe? Let us prove our own selves. Let us prove ourselves by the test here given us. Is Jesus Christ in us? Do we feel his strength made perfect in our weakness? See ch. 12. 9. Do we find that we can do all things through Him strengthening us? See Phil. 4. 13. And the life we now live in the flesh, do we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us? See Gal. 2. 20. If we do, we are approved. If we do not, we are reprobates. Awful alternative! To be tried, and found wanting. To be rejected as counterfeits, as Christians that are no Christians, as giving currency to the base metal of iniquity under the name and image of Christ. God forbid that we should thus disgrace our calling! God grant that we may find his terrors powerful to alarm and edify, and therefore not now in our case mighty to destroy!

St. Paul sendeth his blessing to all.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

§ 543. *That we must live in peace with all.*

How often may the intent of a whole letter be inferred from the tone of the conclusion! How clearly may we, in these last words of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, perceive that throughout all his justifying of himself he was desiring to edify them; and that in the midst of his reproofs and threatening, it was his wish not to punish but to praise. "Finally, brethren, farewell." After all that has been forced from me in self defence, after all the blame I have had to lay on you, after the painful and perilous office of boasting towards those who boasted against me, an office which has rendered this whole Epistle most difficult to write, and not easy for any to understand, except you who well know all the circumstances of the case, I conclude with wishing you heartily farewell. I conclude with the plain practical advice, "Be perfect;" strive after perfection. "Be of good comfort," serve God as sons, with hope, and joy, and cheerfulness of heart. "Be of one mind." Give way to one another in points of difference. "Live in peace." Act kindly and peaceably to each other, even whilst yet you cannot think alike, much more when you can. "And the God of love and peace shall be with you." You shall no longer be at enmity with God. He will not again give you up to sin. "Greet one another with an holy kiss," in token of being reconciled to one another. "All the saints salute you." In token that they rely on your amendment, and are reconciled to you all. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," his great gift, of salvation through his blood, "and the love of God," his inestimable love in giving his Son for us to die, "and the communion of the Holy Ghost," the joint partaking in his precious gifts, "he with you all," with them that have all along obeyed, and with them that have been disobedient, but are now repentant. "Amen!" May the God of love and peace teach us, by the example of, the apostle, thus to wish well, and to hope the best, for all; thus to allay the heat of dissension, by courtesy and kindness towards them that are estranged! "Amen!" May all who differ be brought at length into one fold, there to share in common the Father's love, the Son's redeeming grace, and the holiness and peace and joy of the Holy Ghost. "Amen!"

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE GALATIANS, 1. 1—12.

St. Paul reproveth the Galatians for being removed from the Gospel.

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia :

3 Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father :

5 To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel :

7 Which is not another; but there be some that

trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man,

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

§ 544. *The true Gospel.*

The occasion of writing the Epistle to the Galatians is plain, from what is said by St. Paul, of their being removed from "him that called" them "into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel." That is to say, they had not been firm in the faith; they had not held fast the truth; they had not proved their attachment to God, by their attachment to his Gospel. They had adopted a new view of religion, as it were another Gospel; which however was no other Gospel, but a delusion introduced by some which troubled them, and perverted the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. And therefore the apostle, intending as he did to expose their errors, and to set forth the truth, began his Epistle with solemnly declaring of himself, that he was an apostle not appointed by the rest, nor by any mere man, but directly "by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." How then durst the Galatians swerve from what he had taught them? How durst they? How dare we? The words of St. Paul have still to us the same authority; the authority not of man, but of God. And to this is added the authority of man also, the authority of men who were like himself, servants of God: "all the brethren" which were with him united in this Epistle to the Galatians; all united in recommending to us the doctrine here insisted on, all united in praying for us that we might have grace and peace, "from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." If we would enjoy these blessings, let us endeavour to hold fast this doctrine, that Christ gave himself for our sins, that Christ died in our behalf, in order "that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God," who is also "our Father;" his Father and ours; "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And here we see not only what was the occasion of St. Paul's writing this Epistle, namely the delusion which had befallen the Galatians, but we are also led to understand that the delusion consisted in the denial, or at least in the disparagement, of this primary doctrine of the Gospel, the atonement. For it appears plain, from the tenour of this whole Epistle, that false teachers had been propagating in Galatia their views of the necessity, incumbent as they supposed on all Christians, that they should observe the whole ritual of the Law. And this observance of the Law they insisted on as needful for justifying believers in Christ; nay, not as needful only for their safety, but as helpful and efficacious in the work of saving them. Hence men would be led to put their trust in their own righteousness, that righteousness which was by the Law of Moses. And hence the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the Law, by virtue of the atoning death of

Christ, was obscured, encumbered, nay made null and void. This was the delusion to which the Galatians were exposed. This was the other Gospel unto which some of them were removed. This was what St. Paul denied to be a Gospel at all. And against this it was that he set forth this striking account of the true Gospel: the death of Christ atoning for our sins, with a view to our deliverance from the evil that is in the world through sin, according to God's will, and to his glory.

This is the true Gospel. And there is no other. Nay, though St. Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, should preach any other Gospel unto us, than this which is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, there is denounced against the impostor the fearful sentence, "let him be accursed." How could more solemn sanction have been given to the truth as it is in Christ, Jesus? See Eph. 4. 21. How could the Holy Spirit, speaking by the apostle, have expressed to us more forcibly what a complete and final revelation we have in the New Testament of our Saviour Christ; what a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement and satisfaction He made for us, once for all, by his death? No other Gospel is needed. Nay, any other Gospel must be a most pernicious imposture. Any doctrine different from that of Christ and his apostles, any thing at variance with what they taught, any thing added to their teaching, as if theirs were incomplete, only exposes the teacher to "be accursed." How watchful ought we then all of us to be, that we hold the true Gospel and no other, that we help in our several stations, and according to our several ability, to promote the true Gospel and no other! How ought we to watch that our views of Christianity be not "after man," not such as have been invented to please men, or merely for the purpose of persuading men, with a view to swell the numbers of a party, but actually those very good tidings of great joy which were revealed by Jesus Christ! Oh let us search and see that in the choice of our religion, we seek neither to please others nor to please ourselves, but only to please our Master Christ! Oh let us watch and pray that in the furtherance of our religion, in our endeavours to make all whom we can Christians, we preach no other Gospel than that which was received by the Galatians, when first called by God unto the grace of Christ, even "grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

St. Paul declareth his own apostleship.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my † equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then, after three years I || went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

† Gr. equals in years.

|| Or, returned.

§ 545. *How anxious we ought to be for each other's souls.*

In order to convince the Galatians that his doctrine came direct from God, St. Paul here enters into an account of what happened to himself, when it pleased God to reveal his Son by him. Before that time he had been notable for his zeal in the religion of the Jews. Beyond measure he had persecuted the church of God, the community of Christians. For it was in "the Jews' religion" that he was eminent, in the traditions of his fathers, in the corrupted doctrines of the scribes and Pharisees, not in the true religion of the elder covenant, not in the justice, mercy, and truth, which the Law was designed to enforce, not in those enlightened hopes of a Messiah, not in that universal love for God and man, which both the Law and the Prophets, when duly received, were calculated to establish in the heart. Let us beware, then, lest it be possible also in the religion of Christians to have our behaviour well esteemed amongst men, and to be ourselves exceedingly zealous of the tradition of our fathers, and yet to be counted in our heavenly Master's sight for persecutors of the church of God. If it be for our own views that we are zealous, for our own party, for our own interest, if we are deaf to conviction, if we are averse to prove all things, if we hold fast not that which is good, but that which is profitable, if, without inquiry, we censure all who differ from ourselves, if we feel towards them as enemies, and annoy them as much as lies in our power, then whether their community or our own be the real church of God, in either case we are the persecutors of the church, we are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

But though St. Paul for some time acted thus in ignorance, God had set him apart from the moment of his birth for the work of preaching the truth to the Gentiles. And therefore, in due time, it pleased God to reveal by him Christ Jesus. God called him to be an apostle. God made him an apostle by his own mighty power, by his own direct appointment, by a miraculous revelation of his Son, our Lord, such as left him scarce room to doubt or to refuse. Neither needed he to confer with flesh and blood, to consult the other apostles, or to learn of them the truth which he was now to teach. He was three years before he met with any of them at all, and then saw only Peter and James, abiding with Peter for only fifteen days. And for some time afterwards he was unknown by face unto the Christians at Jerusalem; though all this time he had been preaching unto the heathen the faith which before he had attempted to destroy. And the other apostles and the churches, hearing this of him, "glorified God" in him. So that they were satisfied that his conversion was real, his doctrine true, his apostleship divine. And there could therefore be no ground for the Galatians to doubt, that what he had taught them at the first was what he had been taught of God, from which they must by no means be tempted to depart.

This was the object of St. Paul in thus speaking of himself, in thus dwelling on his own conduct, enforcing his own authority, and confirming what he said with the solemnity of an oath. "The things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not." How earnest is his anxiety in behalf of the Galatians to save them from delusion! How fully is he justified by an end so holy, in calling God to witness the truth of what he wrote, and in writing so much about himself! Let us look to it, that however cautiously we avoid needless oaths, however sensitively we shrink from all needless reference to ourselves, we are not backward, when the safety of our brethren is concerned, both to call God to witness to the truth, and to speak the truth, though it be to our own pain. St. Paul, for such an object, might say, without boasting, "they glorified God in me." Not to say so would have been selfish, if the saying so, though painful to himself, was profitable to the conviction of the Galatians. Oh, how deep then must be our interest in the salvation of each other! how anxiously ought we to watch for the spiritual welfare of each other's souls; if for this end to tell of our own glory is not to boast, if for this purpose the most solemn of oaths is no longer to take God's name in vain!

God make us to feel, both for others and for ourselves, how far above all other objects is the hope of being saved through Christ, saved from this present evil world, admitted to the inheritance of the saints in light!

St. Paul went up again to Jerusalem.

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but || privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised :

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage :

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatso-

ever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me :

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter ;

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles :)

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship ; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

|| Or, severally.

§ 546. *On agreement, and deference to authority.*

St. Paul continued this account of what took place on his becoming an apostle, in order to prove to the Galatians that he derived his doctrines not from men but from God. And he also desired to shew them that the other apostles approved of his proceedings. They gave to him and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship." A most striking instance this of cordial agreement, in a case where much of jealousy might have been naturally expected. For the other apostles could scarce help suspecting the pretensions of one, who professed to derive his appointment and his doctrine, not through them, but direct from Christ. He however proved the grace that was in him. He satisfied them that the gift was given him of God. And they, when they perceived it, when they were aware of the mighty working of God, by the ministry of St. Paul, towards the Gentiles, they then cordially admitted him to be one of their own company. On the one hand, they exercised due caution in ascertaining that he really was commissioned from on high. On the other hand, when satisfied, they gladly received him, to be a fellow worker with themselves. Let us hence learn to beware of jealousy. Let us consider that it comes of pride and selfishness, that it leads to hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Whatever we have that is excellent and honourable, let us be glad to share it with our brethren. Whatever they have that is better than ours, let us not grudge them the possession of their advantages. Whatever we think we have exclusively our own, let us make haste to impart it to others. Let us value it, not the more for belonging only to ourselves, but rather in proportion as it admits of being imparted unto all mankind. Happy were those early converts who counted neither their goods nor their lives to be their own ! Happy are we in proportion as we detach our affections from all that we possess on earth, to fix them with intense desire on that which God has prepared for us in heaven !

And here let us note, that however resolutely St. Paul maintained the divine source of his own doctrine and authority, he was glad to testify to the Galatians, that he had enjoyed the approbation of "James, Cephas, and John," those pillars of the church, and chief amongst the apostles. However sure we may feel, in our own private conduct, that we are doing the revealed will of God, it ought to give us no small peace and joy to be aware that our course is approved by God's most faithful servants. Our own conscience undoubtedly has to answer for it, and therefore our own conscience must in all decide. But one of the chief things by which we ought to be guided in our decision is the judgment of the best of our fellow creatures. Our reason tells us that it is reasonable to defer much to the reason of our brethren. Where we find ourselves greatly differing from the wisest and best of men, we have great need to suspect that we are wrong. Where we find that our own convictions are supported by the sanction of those who are likely to know best, we ought to be thankful for this ground of assurance that we are right.

"Only they would that we should remember the poor." The Christians in Judæa were reduced to great want, and the other apostles wished St. Paul, when he preached to the Gentiles, to make collections in behalf of the Jewish brethren. And this he also was forward to do. In this there was no doubt on either side, that they who had most means ought to help those who had least, that they who became partakers in spiritual things ought to minister to the others in things carnal. See Rom. 15. 27. Well it is for the Christian community that on points like these there can be no division of opinion. All are of one mind as to the duty of almsgiving. Oh that all were of one practice also ! All agree that it is necessary to remember the poor. Oh that all were also forward the same to do !

We are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ.

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel; I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

15 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners as the Gentiles,

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works

of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

§ 547. *We die unto the Law that we may live unto God.*

The chief topic of this Epistle is here resumed, namely, that we are justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Now this was the point on which the Galatians had been led astray. And therefore St. Paul tells them how at the first he had withstood St. Peter in this very matter. For that apostle, it seems, had dissembled his own opinions on the subject, in deference to the prejudices of the Jews; first eating with the Gentiles, as if they had now common privileges, and afterwards withdrawing and separating himself, "fearing them which were of the circumcision." Let us be watchful that we are never tempted by the fear of man to swerve from our duty to our brethren or to God. And especially if we have been enlightened by the truth, if we have had grace to see the freedom of God's gift in the Gospel, its ample sufficiency, its wide extent, and how entirely it is unfettered by respect of persons, let us be bold to assert these its excellences, especially before the face of those, who would rather limit all its favour to themselves.

Far be it from us to trust, as did the Galatians, in ourselves rather than in Christ! Far be it from us like them to refuse to eat and drink with such as differ in opinion from ourselves, and to charge them with consequences which we say follow from their opinions, but which they are far from admitting! "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin," said these Judaizing Christians, meaning that this must follow from the doctrine that we are "justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." But no, this is far from what the apostle means. We are dead unto the Law, but it is in order that we may live unto God. We put our trust in the cross of Christ. We are crucified with Him. And we believe that to his cross is nailed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. See Col. 2. 14. Nevertheless we live. Nay rather, we are now alive far more truly than before. For the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Thus we "do not frustrate the grace of God." We do not make it consistent with sin, we do not make "Christ the minister of sin." And for this very reason we deny that righteousness came by the Law, namely, that this would be to frustrate the grace of God, this would imply that "Christ is dead in vain."

And all this is true not only of the law of Moses, but of all law, all legal obedience. To be aware that we cannot be justified by it, is most helpful towards our heartily obeying. For who are so habitually disobedient as they who repose their trust in their own good works, and at the same time are apt to reckon that God's goodness is such, as will not allow Him to be severe with sin? These think of God as not so very holy, and of themselves as not so very wicked, of their sins as frailties at which He kindly winks, of their service as profitable to gain his favour. But now observe, on the other hand, the life of the believer. Look at him who has been brought to see the utter hopelessness of his ever justifying himself. Let him have learnt that he is justified by the blood of Christ. Let him look upon himself as freely forgiven, reconciled to God, adopted as his son, provided with the help of the Holy Ghost. This is he who reckons himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ. This is he who obeys not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerfully, eagerly, affectionately. This is he who regards Christ, not as the minister of sin, but as the High Priest of holiness. This is he in whom Christ lives, and who lives by Christ living in him: who obeys the more, the more he has been forgiven, and who the more he has been beloved, loves the more.

The blessing of faithful Abraham.

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have ye suffered || so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain?

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was § accounted to him for righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the

gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, ¹ In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, ² *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, ³ *The just shall live by faith.*

12 And the law is not of faith: but, ⁴ *The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, ⁵ *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

|| Or, *so great.*

§ Or, *imputed.*

¹ Gen. 12. 3.

² Deut. 27. 26.

³ Hab. 2. 4. Rom. i. 17.

⁴ Lev. 18. 5.

⁵ Deut. 21. 23.

§ 548. *Why men prefer to think that they are justified by works.*

The doctrine of Christ crucified for our sins is so suitable to our condition as sinners, is so well fitted to relieve us of that which ought to be our chief misery on earth, and lays so sure a foundation for our happiness in heaven, that St. Paul counts the Galatians to be bewitched, in that they suffered themselves to be led away from this truth. And this is a kind of witchcraft, a degree of delusion, by which many Christians now are grievously beguiled. Many professed believers now dislike the doctrine of Christ being our righteousness, and instead of it, are bent upon establishing a righteousness of their own. It is our pride which prompts us thus to think too highly of ourselves. It is our pride which makes us so foolish as to suppose that we can perfect by the flesh what we began in the Spirit. It is pride which brings us thus to suffer many things in vain. For vain would be all that here we suffer, vain all that here we do, if it be done or suffered on the presumption that it can save us from the wrath of God.

Know we not that as long ago as in the case of Abraham, long before the law was revealed by Moses, it was belief that was counted for righteousness? And shall we not now be satisfied with the same method of salvation? Shall we not believe and be thankful? Would we not wish to be children of Abraham? And how can we be his seed, except we be of faith? Does not St. Paul call this the preaching of "the gospel unto Abraham," that in him should all nations be blessed, all who like him believed in the Christ that was to be born of his seed? So then they "which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." They are relieved from the curse which awaits all who are "of the works of the law," all who put their trust in their own doings. For though it be true that "the man that doeth them shall live in them," yet it is no less true of them who are "of the law," that "there is none that doeth good, no not one." Rom. 3. 12. But "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," having taken upon Himself the whole weight of the sentence that was against us. And this He did expressly on purpose that we all, Gentiles as well as Jews, might be entitled to the blessing of Abraham, salvation freely given, to be accepted through faith, even that which the Holy Ghost had promised.

Such are our privileges. Such is the blessing which we share "with faithful Abraham." What would we more? Why desire we to be under the works of the Law? Why are we not content to abide by God's promises? Why are we not thankful to be assured of his love? Why? if it be not that these best of tidings do most forcibly constrain us to that holiness of life, which our nature most obstinately resists? Under the Law obedience is hopeless; and therefore we persuade ourselves that we need not obey. As long as we profess that we are to be justified by our works, we plead our frailty in excuse for neglecting them. But when we own that we live by faith, when we put all our trust in God and in his love, when we believe that He freely gives us all things needful to holiness in this life and to heaven in the next; then, not to work with Him who works with us, then not to love Him who has thus first loved us, then not to be holy as He is holy, and pure as He is pure, this we feel is utterly inexcusable, this we become aware is really sin.

O God, let not us excuse unto ourselves our sinfulness, but daily see more plainly its enormity, daily become more thankful unto Thee for thy love to us miserable sinners! Oh how utterly were we lost in sin, when nothing short of thy Son's death could save us! Oh how hateful must sin be in thy sight, how hateful ought it to be in ours, since it made Christ to be "a curse for us!"

The Law is consistent with the promises of God.

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's || covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17 And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18 For if the inheritance *be* of the law; *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.

21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which

could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

|| Or Testament.

§ 549. *Salvation by promise our Christian inheritance.*

For the strengthening of man's feeble faith, and to "speak after the manner of men," God has graciously represented Himself as bound by a covenant in the redemption of mankind through Christ Jesus. And this covenant has been several times confirmed. It is a covenant of mercy, a covenant of blessing, a covenant of a free gift to be given by God, through Christ, unto mankind. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made;" to his seed, "which is Christ." And this covenant stands good, these promises must needs take effect, though the law given by Moses might seem to supersede them. For this law did in reality help to confirm the promises. It served to convince men of sin. By means of the Law all men are shewn to be sinners, and believers are the more inclined to cling unto God's promises by faith. Thus the Law was as a schoolmaster, to prepare them that were under it for being justified by faith in Christ. Let us often with these views read the books of the Old Testament; both that we may be convinced of sin, and that we may be comforted with the assurance of God's faithfulness; that we may be compelled to seek for refuge in the blood of Christ, and may be satisfied that God is under covenant to shew mercy unto all men for his sake. "Before faith came," whilst the Gospel was not yet revealed, the Law afforded the best of discipline to prepare men for receiving it. And happy, if they had but known their real happiness, happy were those chosen scholars, who being cut off from communion with an idolatrous world, were instructed in the knowledge of the true God, and exercised in the keeping of his commandments. But after that faith was come, it was foolish of the Galatians to be desirous of abiding by the Law. After that faith is come, it is alike foolish in us Christians to wish to stand by works, rather than by faith. No, let us not think of merit of our own. Let it be the height of our ambition to be "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Let us desire and endeavour that it may be true of as many of us as have been baptized into Christ, that we have put on Christ.

What an important view is this of our baptism, that herein we have put on Christ! How lightly are we apt to think of what was then done for us, what was then done in us! How little have we since acted as if we had then really put on Christ? Have we been ever since wearing his holy character? Do we feel as if in the condition of sons? Are we heirs according to the promise? Are we conscious that we are? Do we live as though we were? Let us remember, if we are heirs, and yet care not for our inheritance, we may be heirs, and yet be disinherited. We are heirs, not owners. We inherit, we have not earned, we cannot earn, the heaven which God has promised to give us. By birth, we are heirs of sin and misery. But we have been adopted, and made heirs of holiness and of heaven. We have been born anew, in Christ Jesus, unto good works. We are admitted, for his sake, unto eternal life, in the world that is to come. It is on this ground that we must now obey. It is with these feelings that we must now serve, as children who love their Father's work, as heirs who are interested in their Father's glory.

Oh, how much better is it thus to trust in Him, than fondly to rely upon ourselves! Oh, how much more securely may we rest upon his promises, than on our own best purposes, or works! O God, how good is it in Thee to command, what it is our greatest happiness to do! O God, how good is it in Thee to promise, what it is our chiefest comfort to believe!

Our adoption to be sons.

1 Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the *elements* of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba, Father.*

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or

rather are known of God, how turn ye *again* to the weak and beggarly *elements*, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

10 Ye observe days and months, and times, and years.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.

15 *Where* is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Or, rudiments.

Or, back.

Or, rudiments.

Or, What was then.

§ 550. *The value of the truth.*

We were "under the law" till Christ came. Nay, we "were in bondage under the elements of the world." And the being so is here compared with the condition of an heir, as long as he is a child. He is "under tutors and governors." He is like a servant, in being under constraint. He does not his own will and pleasure, but the will and pleasure of others. And we might add, as another point of resemblance, that as the child, though he is the heir of a large estate, cares more for the few pence in his pocket than for the great wealth which will so soon be his, in like manner, the natural man is more intent upon his present pleasures, all vain, all trifling, as they are, than on the joys which are prepared for him in heaven for ever.

But now, that we are under the Gospel; now, if we believe the Gospel, if we love the Gospel; now, we are no more in bondage; now, our duty is no longer irksome; no longer are we subject to constraint. For now our will, if we be Christians indeed, our will is now conformed to the will of God. We have the adoption of sons; we are no more servants, but sons. We are not now sons under such restraint as makes us like unto servants, but sons who have free access unto God, sons who rejoice to do all that He desires. No wonder, that when the Galatians knew not God, "they did service unto them which by nature were no gods." But is it not most marvellous, that now, when we know what God is, who He is, we should still be averse to serve Him? "God is a Spirit." John 4. 24. "God is love." 1 John 4. 8. So entirely is He love, that we doubt not of his most fearful attributes, that they are now revealed for our good, and will hereafter raise the joy and affection of his saints. And this our God, the only true God, is all around us, all within us. He is where we are always. He is where we are now. He is with us in life. He is with us in death. He is with us after death. And always He is more ready to hear than we to pray; He is wont to give more than we desire or deserve. Always He is looking upon us as his adopted children; and like as a father pities his own offspring, even so does He bear with our infirmities, even so does He remember whereof we are made; so does He try to win us by every means we can conceive, that we should serve Him, and love Him, and obey Him. Thus it is, that we know God; or rather, are known, thought of, cared for, by Him. And is it not most strange, when He continually sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, teaching us to cry, "*Abba, Father,*" is it not most strange, that we should be tempted to make light of the good tidings He reveals, and often to treat his messengers, as the Galatians treated St. Paul, at first perhaps with kindness, but afterwards as if they were our enemies, and this for the same reason, because they tell us the truth?

The truth is the thing that really is. The truth is not altered by our not believing it. It is not altered by our hating it. It is not altered by our ceasing to love them that tell us of it. It is not altered by our counting them for our enemies. Heaven is still heaven, and hell is still hell. God is still God, whatever we may think; too holy not to hate iniquity; too faithful not to forgive, as He hath promised, our sins, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us then count those for our best friends, who remind us of these most profitable realities. Whatsoever be their infirmities, let us be glad to hear from their lips the Gospel of God. Let us be most thankful to know God as He really is. Let us be most anxious to serve Him as He would have us. Let us at all times bear in mind how holy, how good He is; how willing He is to hear; how nigh to help; how free to give, in answer to our prayers; how sure to pardon, according to his word!

The two covenants compared.

17 They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude *you*, that ye might affect them.

18 But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for *I* stand in doubt of you.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two *covenants*; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and

answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, 'Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, *thou* that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.'

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.'

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

|| Or *us*.

|| Or *I am perplexed for you*.

|| Or, *testaments*.

|| Or, *is in the same rank with*.

¹ Is. 54. 1.

² Gen. 21. 10.

§ 551. *Zeal, good and evil.*

St. Paul here draws a contrast between two kinds of zeal. On the one hand, "they zealously affect you, but not well;" on the other, "it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." And in this contrast there is especial reference to the zeal of the false teachers, who desired to establish the whole law revealed by Moses, as binding on the consciences of Christians. In order to convince them of their error, to shew them that their zeal was not in a good matter, the apostle reminds them of what was written in the Old Testament, "that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman." And of these two he says, that they signified "the two covenants." For the children of the bondmaid would be born to servitude; and the children of the freewoman would be born to liberty. And thus also the one covenant "gendereth to bondage," and the other to liberty; for "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." So many are the children of the freewoman! so many more souls has the Gospel borne to God than the Law! so many more has it brought up in holiness unto heaven!

Hence we learn how highly we ought to value our spiritual liberty in the Gospel, how zealous we ought to feel in imparting it to others, and how carefully we ought to watch against wasting our zeal in communicating and perpetuating a spirit of bondage. The liberty wherewith Christ has made us free is freedom from the spirit of fear. It is also freedom from the dominion of sin. The two must go together. For to sin and not to fear is the height of sinfulness. To sin wilfully, on the presumption, that through God's mercy we may sin securely, this is the highest aggravation of our iniquity, for this is the most gross abuse of God's love. And yet we must constantly bear in mind, that the way of avoiding sin chiefly dwelt upon in the New Testament, is the way of faith, and the way of love; the way of trust in God's promises; the way of hope in God's mercy; the way of thankful reliance on the death of the Son of God. Though it be presumption to sin fearlessly, yet it is, also true, that not to fear is one way not to sin. To look upon God as a reconciled Father, this is the most effectual of all means to our being holy. A lively apprehension of our sinfulness in sinning, is indeed combined, in the Christian character, with our sense of God's mercy in forgiving us. And as long as we are on earth, we shall have fear lest we offend God, as well as trust in his grace to preserve us from offence. But in proportion as we advance in our experience of the Gospel, the former of the two yields unto the latter; fear gives way to trust; yea, "perfect love casteth out fear." 1 John 4. 18.

Let it then be for this Gospel that we are zealously affected. This Gospel let us most earnestly desire to spread abroad, as widely as we can. Though he that is "born after the flesh" still persecute him that is "born after the Spirit," though the advocate of legal righteousness cast reproaches on those who aim to be the children of the promise, yet God's word will not fail. Our success in the end is sure. "The desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." The doctrines of grace, however they may be despised in the world, are alone able, when all others fail, to make mankind the children of God. Oh that we may love them heartily! Oh that we may spare no pains to make them lovely in the eyes of our fellow creatures! Oh that we may be careful to express them soberly, diligent to practise them continually, and earnest to preach them, or to promote their being preached, faithfully, effectually, abundantly!

St. Paul exhorteth to stedfastness.

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

7 Ye did run well; ¶who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

¶ Or, *who did drive you back?*

8 This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear *his* judgment, whosoever he be.

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

¹ Lev. 19. 18. Matt. 22. 39.

§ 552. *Christian liberty.*

St. Paul having already shewn what that liberty is wherewith Christ has made us free, next calls upon the Galatians to "stand fast" in it, and not to be "entangled again with the yoke of bondage." This is an exhortation which very closely concerns ourselves. We also have been made free by Christ. We also are often beset by those who would entangle us in the yoke of fear, and in the bondage of iniquity. For satan, whose kingdom cannot stand against the reign of grace, is most anxious to delude us into a false persuasion of our own natural ability to serve and please God. And if thus we trust to our own works and performances, it comes to pass that Christ profits us nothing. To seek to be justified by the Law, is to fall from grace. We become debtors to do the whole Law. And this is a debt which we can never pay. Instead of being "justified by the law," "we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." This is our character. This is the character of true Christians. This is our character if we be true Christians.

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." We must believe, and also we must love. Our love must come of our believing. Our belief must lead us to love. Our obedience must spring from faith and love together; not out of the notion that our works justify us, but out of faith in God that He justifies the ungodly, out of love to God for so doing unto us. It is to the works of the Law that faith is here opposed, not to such works as spring from faith. Works done in the presumption that they justify us, these avail nothing. And yet it is a faith "which worketh," and no other, this it is which avails. Let us watch, that no one hinder us that we should not obey this truth. Let us beware of that evil leaven which would puff us up, on the one hand, with pride in our own doings; on the other, with confidence in an inactive faith. We might indeed by these means avoid persecution. The offence of the cross, as far as we give offence by trusting only in Christ crucified, might cease. Satan and his agents, our worst enemies, those who trouble and unsettle us in our faith, might be content to let us rest in deadly error. But see how St. Paul wished that such were even cut off! See how stedfastly we ought to refuse to join their company, or to suffer them to join themselves, being such, to ours!

We have been called unto liberty. Let us rejoice in it. Let us resolve to stand fast in it. Let nothing shake us from the persuasion, that it is faith working by love which "availeth any thing," and that, only in "Jesus Christ;" only through the atonement of his death. But at the same time let us be warned that we use not this "liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." If we sin, we are no longer free. His servants we are to whom we obey. See Rom. 6. 16. Our freedom is deliverance from sin. We are not at liberty to please ourselves in sinning. But having been originally in the bondage of iniquity, we are now free to be holy if we will. We have grace given us to be holy. We have most urgent motives unto holiness. We have armour provided against our spiritual enemy. We are assured of the kind regards of our Father which is in heaven. And hence we learn to love, and also to serve, one another. Hence we learn that even as God loves us, so ought we to love our brethren. For in this, we are told, the whole Law is fulfilled, even, in this one word "love." This is all the law that is binding upon Christians. And by this we may know how much is now binding; whatever is a part of love, whatever falls within the rule of universal charity. From this we are not set free. To this we are in the Gospel more bound than ever.

God grant that we may rejoice thus to fulfil the Law! God grant that in this, and in all other points, we may stand fast in the Gospel!

That we must walk in the Spirit, not after the flesh.

16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

|| Gr. *fulfil* not.

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the [†] affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

† Or, *passions*.

§ 553. *The works of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit.*

Here we have the best of cautions against abusing that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." We should not so much as wish to sin if we were thoroughly occupied with the work of holiness. For as "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," so also does "the Spirit against the flesh." "And these are contrary the one to the other." How vain then is all attempt on our part to gratify them both at once! It cannot, no, it cannot be. We cannot at once serve God and mammon. We cannot be at once following where the Spirit leads, and also complying with what the flesh requires. Let us not in this matter be deceived. Are we led by the Spirit? If not, we may be sure, however little we suspect it, we are following the lusts of the flesh. Or again, would we be delivered from the bondage of the flesh? There is no other way but this, we must be led by the Spirit. Without the guidance and help of the Spirit, we cannot do the things that we would. But if we be "led of the Spirit," then we are not under the Law. Then we obey, not because we fear, but because we love; not because we dare not sin, but because we would not if we durst.

We are here very plainly told what the works of the flesh are, and also, that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And thus there is no room for evasion or escape, on the part of those who wish to turn into licentiousness the liberty of the Gospel. However boundless may be the mercy of God, yet they who do these things have no part in his kingdom. And these things are the very same which are forbidden in the Law, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." These things, if we are Christ's, we have crucified, even "the flesh with the affections and lusts." Away with them, away with them, crucify them. This is the language we ought to hold towards all such abominations. It is not fit for such things to be. And here let us remember how it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Ch. 3. 13. Let these things that are to be crucified become accursed in our estimation. Let us "abhor that which is evil." Rom. 12. 9. Let us consider how sin has cost our Saviour's blood. Let us think how each time it is renewed, it does, as it were, crucify Him afresh. Far be it from us to aggravate his sufferings! Far be it from us to take part with his enemies! Far be it from us to be unclean, or drunken, contentious, or superstitious, vain glorious, malicious, or envious!

No, let us set our hearts upon the fruit of the Spirit. Let us love each other, and love God; "the fruit of the Spirit is love." Let us rejoice always; "the fruit of the Spirit is joy." Let us labour for peace with others; let us be at peace among ourselves; the fruit of the Spirit is "peace." It is "long suffering;" let us be patient. It is "gentleness;" let us be gentle. It is "goodness;" let us be kind to one another. It is "faith," let us be faithful; "meekness," let us be meek; "temperance," let us be pure and sober. "Against such there is no law." We are not under the Law if we are such. We can become such only by being under the Gospel. If we are really under the Gospel, if we really live by the Spirit, let us prove it by also walking by the Spirit. Here is advancement without emulation; a race in which there is no strife; victory without vain glory; success without envying of others who succeed. We walk, but we desire to have company in our journey. We run, and also wish to be first; and yet we wish our brethren to be first also. We long for every one of our fellow creatures to enjoy the same gifts, to wear the same crown, to dwell in the same heaven, to be with the same Christ for ever.

Oh that God may prosper them and us! Oh that we may be able, through being Christ's, to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts! Oh that we, through the Spirit, may mortify the deeds of the body, and live for evermore! See Rom. 8. 13.

The concluding exhortations.

1 Brethren, || if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good

unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, † by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

|| Or, *although*.

† Or, *whereby*.

§ 554. *That we must glory in the cross of Christ.*

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." 1 Cor. 8. 1. They who know much, and love little, are apt to censure their brethren, and to be severe with those who fall, forgetting how much they themselves are in need of forgiveness. But the more truly we are spiritual, we shall be the more forbearing towards each other, we shall be the more watchful lest we be overtaken in a fault ourselves. We shall bear one another's burdens, not triumphing, but sorrowing with godly sorrow, over them that sin; not eager to shut them out from our society, but glad of an opportunity to restore them, in the spirit of meekness. "Who is weak?" we shall be able to say truly, with St. Paul: "who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. 11. 29. Instead of busying ourselves to judge our brethren, we shall be diligent in proving our own work, examining our own hearts, watching against our own besetting sins. It is for these that we shall have to answer at the day of judgment. Our own burdens we then must bear. And if these through God's grace prove light, if by God's help we now flee from sin, we shall then have ground of rejoicing in ourselves, whatever may be the condition of our brethren. Oh, let us therefore help them, but judge ourselves. Oh, let us be at once severe to mark the least that we do ourselves amiss; and kind to overlook the worst of their offences against ourselves, yea, to plead for their reconciliation unto God.

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." This is a doctrine which teachers are often reluctant to enforce; lest they should be suspected of interested views. But where God has thus plainly revealed it, no man ought to venture to suppress it. Be it remembered then that this is the duty of every Christian: to communicate, or impart, unto those who teach him in the Lord, out of the store with which God has blessed him. And in this matter, be it remembered, God will not be mocked. In this matter, as in all kinds of giving, nay and also in all our conduct, be it what it may, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Let us look to it then that we sow whilst it yet is seed time. Let us look to it that we sow what we should wish to reap. Let us take care that we give freely, of that which is our own, for the support of the ministers of religion. Let us do good as we have opportunity unto all men. Let us especially persevere in our bountiful attentions towards "them who are of the household of faith." "Behold, the husbandman," says St. James, "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth." And shall not we be content to wait for the joys of heaven? He "hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." James 5. 7. And shall we be weary in well doing, when God already gives the dew of his grace, to help us in our Christian growth, when He assures us of our spiritual sowing, that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not?" No; let us sow diligently, let us sow hopefully, let us work without weariness, let us wait without impatience. Let us sow not to the flesh but to the Spirit. And of the Spirit we shall "reap life everlasting."

St. Paul wrote this Epistle with his own hand, because he wished to shew the Galatians how anxious he felt in the chief matter about which he had to write. And to this he now again refers at the conclusion,

"the cross of Christ," the only way of salvation, as opposed to the works of the law of Moses. For there were at that time many who insisted on obedience to the Law, especially in respect to circumcision, in such a way as to make the Gospel of none effect. Seeing then how St. Paul dwells upon this subject, how often he refers to it, how large a space it takes up in his epistles, we may be sure that it is a subject on which it is good for us often and seriously to meditate. Is it then, let us ask, is it the desire of our hearts, to glory in nothing else except only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we feel that by Him the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world? Do we find in ourselves that new creation, here insisted on, as being that which really avails? Do we find the peace in our hearts, which St. Paul here prays for, in behalf of all who walk by this rule? Have we a firm trust in God's mercy? Are our hopes deep rooted in his promises? Have we now in our lives the evidence of his grace? Have we in his grace given unto us at present, the evidence of his salvation to be given unto us in the end?

This is the state of feeling St. Paul would have us to attain. This is the new creation to be formed in us. And it is for this end that he so frequently insists on this doctrine of Christ crucified. "Other foundation can no man lay." 1 Cor. 3. 11. "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;" or, as it is before expressed, "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love;" Ch. 5. 6; or, as in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, 7. 19, "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." These commandments are those which Christ enforced. This new creature is Christ formed in us. This faith is faith in Christ. This love is love of God in Christ. This work is the work which Christ has ordained. And it is only in Christ Jesus that it avails. Oh, that we who have been signed with the sign of the cross, may ever remember how we bear in our bodies this mark of the Lord Jesus! Oh, that the grace of our Lord Jesus may ever be with our spirit! Amen.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE EPHESIANS: 1. 1—14.

St. Paul blesseth God for the election of his people.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *||* places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in *†* heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first *‡* trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

|| Or, things.

† Gr, the heavens.

‡ Or, hoped.

§ 555. *The Holy Spirit the earnest of our inheritance.*

We read of Ephesus, in the Acts of the Apostles, how much the people of that city used to put their trust in their goddess Diana, how heartily very many of them notwithstanding, were turned to the Lord by the preaching of St. Paul, and how affectionately the same apostle exhorted the elders of their church, when he sent for them to meet him at Miletus. See Acts ch. 19. Here we have an Epistle written with the like warmth of love, "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus;" in the opening of which St. Paul first expresses after his usual manner his desire that they may enjoy grace and peace, and then pours forth in their behalf the most animated thanks to God, for the inestimable blessings vouchsafed unto mankind through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is one of the most endearing of all the names of God. Not only is He our Father; He is the Father of our Lord. Not only is He the Father of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is man; but inasmuch as Jesus is also God, He is God the Son, and his Father is God the Father. It is in the Son, "in Christ," that the Father has "blessed us, with all spiritual blessings," and therefore it is for the Son that we must give thanks unto the Father, and it is to the Father that we must give thanks for the Son. Oh, that we may have wisdom to understand how Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost are Three, and yet are One, are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet are One God! Oh, that we may desire to know all we can, and have grace to love even further than we know! Oh that we may be sensible of the many blessings with which God has blessed us in things heavenly, and may bless Him, and praise Him, and thank Him, not only with our lips but with our lives!

For truly we may take unto ourselves the great things here said of the Ephesians. We may look upon ourselves as having been chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." We may consider that God "hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." And what can we imagine more to thank God for than this? How can we sufficiently accuse ourselves of sin, if for this we are not thankful? Has God chosen us to be holy, from the foundation of the world, and shall we still love to lead a life of wickedness? Has He chosen us to be blameless; and shall we still prefer to offend? Has He settled it in his

purpose, that we should, as adopted sons, live according to his pleasure, and to the praise of his marvellous gift, in that He has thus through Christ accepted us? And shall we, can we, thanklessly continue to serve Him, not as children freely and affectionately, but as servants grudgingly and by constraint? Far be it from us thus unworthily to return his love! What, have we not redemption in Christ through his blood, redemption from the bondage of iniquity? And had we rather be still slaves of sin? Have we not forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace? And shall we presume upon the gift we have already received, to draw more largely on his bounty, to trespass more boldly against his will? No, let us make this his goodness the foundation of our affectionate obedience. Let us endeavour to learn how greatly He has loved us, for our direction as to the love we ought to feel for Him.

God has abounded towards us in the riches of his grace, in the costly and precious gifts which He has bestowed on us. He has abounded to us "in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure;" so that we are no longer ignorant of our duty whilst on earth, or of the glory which awaits us as the end of our obedience. He has shewn us that it is his purpose to gather together in one all things in Christ; that we which are on earth might have joint inheritance with them that are in heaven. He has revealed it, that to this we are predestinated, and that, by Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Who then shall be against us? What need we fear? How can we doubt? Why do we one moment hesitate to believe that heaven is really ours? And how, if we believe this really, how can we any longer live unto the earth? Surely this will be the most effectual help towards our living to the praise of God's glory, for us to trust in Christ, for us to believe that through his grace we might thus live! Surely we cannot hear the word of truth, and know it to be the Gospel of our salvation, and yet not believe, not trust! Surely, if we believe, we shall also be "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." "The earnest of our inheritance;" a pledge of it, a pledge consisting of a part of it, a portion of our inheritance itself, given us for our present possession, and in order to assure us that we shall receive the rest. This is what the Holy Spirit of promise is. This is what the Holy Ghost is, that Spirit which is promised to all who pray for a gift so excellent. The grace He imparts, the holiness He helps us to attain, the faith, and hope, and charity, which now, through his help, abide in us, these are a part of the possession purchased for us by Christ, a part sufficient to assure us of the rest, as an earnest, but yet compared with the rest so small as to be counted for an earnest only. Oh, how excellent then must heaven be itself! How holy, how pure, how good, the joys of our heavenly inheritance! Oh, how earnestly must we strive to attain unto the full possession of the whole! Oh, how yet more diligently must we persevere, out of regard to the honour of our Lord, for the praise of the glory of Christ!

St. Paul prays for the Ephesians.

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation || in the knowledge of him :

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his

power to usward who believe, according to the working † of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

|| Or, for the acknowledgment.

† Gr. Of the might of his power.

§ 556. *The knowledge of Christ.*

St. Paul, when he contemplated the riches of God's mercy in Christ, could not help breaking forth into a strain of thanksgiving. And especially he gave thanks for those of whose faith and love he heard a good report. But whilst he offered thanks, he neglected not also to offer prayers. And for ourselves it is no less necessary that we should pray to God for help in time to come, as well as thank Him for mercies already received. We have seen what we chiefly have to be thankful for; let us here learn for what we might most profitably pray. Let us learn with a view to praying for the things here mentioned. Let us pray, as feeling how much we want them, as longing to have them, as knowing that we cannot have them except of God, except we ask of Him in prayer, and as being also fully assured that He is more willing to hear than we to pray, and is wont to give more than we desire; how infinitely more than we deserve!

The chief thing then for which we here are taught to pray to God, is spiritual wisdom, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." And this means, that the eyes of our understanding should be enlightened, for us to "know what is the hope of his calling," the hope to which He has called us; "and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," which He has prepared for the saints; "and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe," power manifested in imparting holiness and joy unto believers. This we ought to pray to understand; this we ought most earnestly to desire that we may know. But can we know the love of God? Nay, it passeth knowledge. And yet we must long to know as much of it as we can. And we may know as much as God has revealed for our instruction. We may know what it is which He has invited us to hope for, life eternal. We may know what are the riches of the glory which He has laid up for the inheritance of the saints, even to be with Christ, where He is. We may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, even to make us holy and happy for ever. Such is the working of his mighty power! Such are the mysteries which we must pray to understand! Such are the marvellous things which we must look into with eyes enlightened by his grace! things "which he wrought in Christ;" as when He raised Christ from the dead; as when He set Christ at his own right hand in the heavenly places; as when He exalted Christ above every thing, both in earth and heaven, making Him "the head over all things," to his body the church! Would that we might really know these things as God has been pleased to reveal them! For then how could we help loving to know them more and more? how not love to do that which we find to be God's will? how not long to enjoy that which we are told is his glory?

These things cannot rightly be said to be known by such as live a worldly life. A man cannot be thought to know that he may have heaven if he will, when he proceeds steadily in the way to hell. A man cannot be thought to know that his sins are forgiven, and that he is redeemed from the power of sin, when we see him still afraid to resist temptation, afraid that he shall fail in the attempt, and yet afraid also that he shall be punished for his transgressions, afraid that when he dies he shall perish everlastingly. Oh that God may make us know more clearly, that we may do more diligently! Oh that God may help us to teach others, that they may not perish for lack of knowledge! Oh that we may communicate that knowledge which ends not in profession, but in practice, by not merely professing, but practising ourselves! And especially let us here learn to know of Jesus Christ, how high He is, how great, how glorious; how above all things else, but only God; nay, how He is God Himself. For the church is his body; but it is the Church of God. See Col. 1. 24. Christ is the Head, "that filleth all in all." And God is in the end "all in all." 1 Cor. 15. 28. Thus Christ is God. Oh that He may be all in all to us! Oh that He may fill all, in us, and in all men! Oh that He may fill all our hearts with the Holy Spirit, that proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and with the fervent love, and devout obedience, which only the Holy Spirit can impart!

How the dead in sins are quickened in Christ.

1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling † the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

† *Gr. the wills.*

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:*

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before || ordained that we should walk in them.

|| *Or, prepared.*

§ 557. *By grace we are saved through faith.*

Both Jews and Gentiles were by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Both walked therein, in time past, "according to the course of this world," as men naturally would walk, who knew of no world but this, and who in all things were guided by the practices of the world, going on from sin to sin. Both were thus advancing in iniquity, "according to the prince of the power of the air," as satan would wish all to transgress, satan, who is elsewhere called the "prince of this world," John 12. 31, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," still influencing, according to his pleasure, the lives of those Christians who disobey their Lord. In this way it was, that both Jews and Gentiles used to live by nature, thus "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," the evil appetites of the body, and the corrupt inclinations of the soul; being by nature the children of wrath, one even as the other; both born to an inheritance of endless misery. This then was our case also. Thus it was that we also should have been born, thus have lived, thus died, and thus have perished for ever, had not God, according to the working of his mighty power, raised Christ from the dead. See ch. 1. 19, 20.

But God "is rich in mercy." It is in love that He most largely abounds. It is with great love that He has loved us. And in this is his love made manifest, that "when we were dead in sins" He "quickened us together with Christ;" first forgiving us our sins for his Son's sake, then giving us freely the gift of newness of life. He raised us up together with Christ, raised us from sin to holiness; and "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" entitled us to a portion in that heavenly glory which is the proper inheritance of our Lord, even where He is seated at the right hand of the Father. See ch. 1. 20. "That in the ages to come," in all future periods of this world, and in the endless ages of eternity, God "might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." This is one great object of this world's continuance. This is one of the chief things which will constitute the joy and the glory of heaven; the exercise of God's goodness towards the children of men, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For this end it is consistent with God's goodness, that these many wicked and adulterous generations should be permitted to flourish in the world. For this He suffers still the cruel to oppress, the covetous to hoard, the scorner to blaspheme. How great then must his kindness be! How greatly must God delight in shewing it! in feeling it, in making it to be felt! How nigh to heaven might we find our sojourn on the earth, if our hearts were filled with the contemplation of God's love towards us through Christ Jesus!

"For by grace are ye saved through faith." Here we have some of the chief particulars of God's love set forth. "By grace," by free gift, by undeserved mercy. We are saved; we are delivered from that danger in which otherwise we stood, from the misery in which we must else have dwelt for ever. "Through faith;" through our believing in God, that He justifies the ungodly for his Son's sake. "And that not of yourselves." Our salvation is not of our own doing. It is of God's doing. "It is the gift of God." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." We are not saved by our obedience, we are not saved by our faith; but "by grace;" by God's free gift, by the merits of our Saviour Christ; so that no flesh can glory in his presence. For our good works are not altogether ours, but God's, as is also our faith, and hope, and love; or rather, as we also are ourselves. "For we are his workmanship," we are God's creatures, made by his power at the first, and now anew "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," or for which He has ordained us, that we might walk therein. Let us walk therefore according to this our new creation. Let us walk according to the will of Him who created us anew. Let us walk according to the image of Him in whom we are created. Let us walk in those good works which God has in his word appointed, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

How Christ reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God.

11 Wherefore remember that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

|| Or, in himself.

§ 558. *Agreement of Christians with each other.*

The Ephesian Christians had for the most part been "in time past Gentiles in the flesh," Gentiles by their natural descent. And St. Paul here speaks of himself, and of such of them as were Jewish converts, as having been a distinct party. And it is his object to shew wherein the distinction had consisted, how it had been done away with by Christ, and how all parties, now by Him brought together, ought to form one body, holy unto the Lord. The distinction was marked by the names of the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision. The one party had the covenant of promise. The other had not. The one had hope. The others were hopeless. The one had the knowledge of the true God. The others were without God in the world. These differences formed the real partition between Jews and Gentiles, of which the middle wall in the temple was a sign and symbol. And to these must be added especially the ceremonial law, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," a law whence much of enmity arose between Jew and Gentile, each reckoning the other for aliens, for members of a kind of commonwealth entirely distinct.

But this law Christ fulfilled by his death, and utterly abolished it, or put an end to it. And by this means, even by his blood, He brought nigh them that were before far off; far off from God, and from God's people. He "made both one." He made "in himself," or rather by Himself, by his death, "of twain one new man." He made peace between the two, by making both at peace with God. He reconciled both unto God by his own body put to death upon the cross. He came and preached peace, the same peace, both to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh. "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Through Jesus Christ! How plainly in this passage is the whole work of our salvation set down to the atonement of his blood! How entirely does the argument of St. Paul depend on its being first known and acknowledged, that it is "by the blood of Christ," that it was "in himself," "in one body by the cross," by these means, and by these only, that we are reconciled unto the Father. "He is our peace." It is through Him that we have access. But it is unto the Father that we have access. And it is "by one Spirit" that we have access. "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here then we see the whole mystery of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, revealed in a single verse. Here we learn how they are Three as persons; how they are One as God. Let us desire and endeavour to draw nigh unto the Father. Let us ever bear in mind that only through the Son we can approach Him. Let us be no less firmly persuaded, and no less continually mindful, that it is by one Spirit, and by one only, even by the Holy Ghost making our hearts holy, only by his blessed influence it is that we can be where we fain would be, in full communion with our Father which is in heaven.

Now, therefore, let us feel as if we were no more strangers and foreigners, not strangers unto God, nor foreigners amongst each other, "but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." If Jews and Gentiles ought to feel towards each other this cordial assurance of mutual regard, how much more ought we who are of one family according to the flesh, as we are also of one household of faith! With what affection ought we to approach unto each other! With what delightful conviction that we shall be affectionately received! All are built on the one and same foundation, that of the apostles and prophets. All rest on the same chief corner stone, Jesus Christ. How fitly is the building framed together in Him! Oh that we were as we ought to be, in harmony with each other! Oh that we might help each in his respective place to the growth of this living temple, the church of the Lord! Oh that we may be built into it as living stones, being ourselves, and helping to make the church, "through the Spirit," an habitation fit for God to dwell in!

The eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus.

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 (If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward :

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery ; (as I wrote || afore in few words ;

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,)

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel :

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the

effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ;

9 And to make all *men* see, what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ :

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places*, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord :

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

|| Or, a little before.

§ 559. *How we should help to make God's goodness known.*

St. Paul here calls himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ." And yet Christ came to give liberty to the captives. See Luke 4. 18. And in like manner, though peace on earth was one chief purpose of his coming, see Luke 2. 14, the result in regard to many of mankind has been not peace but a sword. See Matt. 10. 34. This arises from our own evil passions, from pride and perversity, from anger and cruelty; through these it is that Christians are so oftentimes at variance, through these St. Paul was delivered by the Jews a prisoner into the hands of the Romans. Oh that we may be glad for Christ's sake, to bear cheerfully whatever men lay upon us! Oh that we may have grace to lay upon ourselves, upon our own evil tempers and propensities, such restraints, denial, and confinement, as may make us worthy to be called prisoners of the Lord!

The apostle calls himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." It was for the faithfulness with which he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, that the Jews had accused him to the Romans. And having alluded to this his case, he goes on, without finishing his sentence, to dwell throughout this chapter on the gracious message with which he had been entrusted; namely, "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body," and partakers of the promise of God in Christ by the Gospel. Most glad tidings of most great joy! Who could have thought, that saw the nations of the Gentiles living without God in the world, who could have thought that for them God still cared, that for them in due time He would give his Son, that for them, and for their children after them, He would proclaim forgiveness of sin, and the inheritance of the saints in light? And who that should now contemplate the indifference of reputed Christians to the glad tidings which they cannot avoid hearing, who could guess that for these men heaven is now open, and that but for their own fault they might all now be making good their entrance therein?

Of this Gospel St. Paul was made a minister. And this he counted for a signal instance of the grace of God, and of the effectual working of his power. Far beyond any deserts of his he felt it, especially considering that he had once persecuted the church; far beyond his deserts that he should "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" that he should help towards making "all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery," how widely that Gospel is extended, which heretofore had been "hid in God," concealed purposely from mankind. So high an honour did St. Paul count his office, that even the tribulations to which it exposed him were matter of glorying, and that not only to him he reckoned, but to those in whose behalf he suffered. How great then ought to be our joy and thankfulness, to find that with little risk of any such tribulation as St. Paul's, we may have part in the same glorious work, even in making known the Gospel to mankind. This, let us remember this was the great glorying of St. Paul. This helps to make known God's manifold wisdom not only to mankind on earth, but also to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. And this it was God's eternal purpose thus to have made known. And this "he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." What can we have more for our encouragement in spreading abroad the knowledge of salvation? It is God's purpose. He purposed it in Christ. It is the purpose of that very Saviour in whom alone we have, through faith, access unto God. Do we use this access? Do we exercise this faith? Do we feel this peace and joy in believing? Let us endeavour to communicate the like joy to our fellow creatures. Let us speak for the Gospel. Let us give for the Gospel. Let us live for the Gospel. Let us make our light shine before men, with this single object ever in our view, that they may, through Jesus Christ, glorify our Father which is in heaven.

St. Paul bows his knees unto God in our behalf.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend, with all saints,

what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

§ 560. *Knowledge, faith, and love.*

To feel ourselves entrusted with the dispensation of the grace of God, to be persuaded that by the influence of our words, and works, we may help to make men wise unto salvation, and so help to make known throughout the universe the manifold wisdom of God, this is one of the most stirring of all motives to holiness of life, this is the chief lesson we have endeavoured to learn from St. Paul's account of his own commission. Let us now further observe how he seconded his exertions by his prayers, or rather how his prayers held a chief place in his exertions, as they ought to hold a chief place in ours. "For this cause I bow my knees," this is the apostle's way of saying that he prayed. This may teach us, that when we pray, we ought to kneel upon our knees, to make the posture of the body agree with the devotion of the soul. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This shews us how in our praying we ought to think of God, even as the Father of our Saviour, even as having given for us his Son, to die for our sins, upon the cross. How then can we doubt but that He who gave us a gift so far beyond all that we could expect, will likewise for his sake, if we ask, freely give us all things?

And next let us observe what it is the apostle asks for, let us learn what we ought chiefly to ask for, in behalf of our own souls, and in behalf of our brethren. We ought to beg most earnestly that God would grant us, "according to the riches of his glory," in proportion to the abundance of his majesty and dominion, "to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Weak we are, and helpless of ourselves; sure to be assaulted, sure to fall. Weak we are within, though seemingly resolute; sure to flinch from the professions we have made, from the purposes we have formed. But God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. See 2 Cor. 12. 9. By his Spirit we are strengthened. We become mighty in the inner man. The evil that we would not, we are enabled not to do. The good we would, in that we prosper. And this is by means of the help of the Holy Spirit of God, which God has promised to give to them that ask Him. Oh let us then pray for grace to help in time of need! Oh let us pray for strength to stand in time of trial, yea, for great strength mightily to conquer!

And especially let us pray, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we may believe, and that believing we may become meet for the indwelling of our Saviour, even a temple holy unto the Lord. And for this end let us beseech God, that we may be rooted and grounded in love. Let us pray, that love may be to our lives as a root to the tree, as a foundation to the temple, that which conveys nourishment and stability to the whole. Only by means of love can we believe as we ought to do. Only by means of love can we know all we might. It is true we must know first, ere we can believe. It is true we must first believe, in order for us to love. But if our knowledge lead not to our believing, it is in vain. And if our faith work not love, it is fruitless. And when we both know, and believe, it is only if thereupon we love, that we can succeed in believing more and knowing more. Each grace is assistant to the other. As we grow in one, this helps us to grow in all the rest. And thus it is only by being rooted and grounded in love, that we can approach towards knowing that which passeth knowledge, the love of Christ, or that we can comprehend as far, as it is given unto saints to comprehend, its "breadth, and length, and depth, and height." Thus might we be "filled with all the fulness of God." Thus might we go on from strength to strength, from grace to grace, until we are all that God would have us be, even all that Christ has commanded us.

Able God is "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Able He has proved to be, and willing also, in all that He has done for us already. Able and willing we shall find Him, in all that He has prepared for us hereafter. Oh let us then trust in his promises, pray for his help, and praise Him for his goodness. "Unto him be glory in the church." Unto Him be glory in us; in our lips and in our lives. "By Christ Jesus;" by Him dwelling in our hearts, by Him manifest in our words and actions. "Throughout all ages;" in time past, and present, and to come. "World without end;" even when time shall cease. "Amen." So be it, we pray Thee, gracious God. So may thy will be accomplished! so may thy glory be magnified! so may thy Gospel flourish! so may thy church prosper! So may we thy servants help to glorify thy name! "Amen."

St. Paul exhorts to unity.

1 I therefore, the prisoner || of the Lord,) beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, † When he ascended up on high, he led † captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might † fill all things.)

11 * And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come § in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the ¶ stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But * speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16 † From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.

|| Or, in the Lord.

† Ps. 68. 18.

† Or, a multitude of captives.

† Or, fulfil.

‡ 1 Cor. 12. 28.

§ Or, into the unity.

¶ Or, age.

* Or, being sincere.

‡ Col. 2. 19.

§ 561. *Sincerity in love.*

Unity of faith, unity in the church, even for all believers in Christ to be of one mind and of one heart, this is the duty which is here first recommended. And this is described as “the unity of the Spirit,” being that which is most agreeable to the Holy Spirit of God. “There is one body, and one Spirit,” one church of Christ’s faithful people, one Holy Ghost to make them holy. There is one hope of our calling, one heaven, and one only. And so also there is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” no other sacrament can be right, no other faith correct, no other Christ can be a Saviour, save what is in the Gospel set forth. And so also God is one, and one only. How then can we imagine that any other religion than one can be right? How can we be indifferent as to which is the right one? God does indeed through Christ give to different persons different kinds and measures of grace. And Christ, who first descended to this lower earth, and afterwards ascended into heaven, Christ, who “led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men,” has undoubtedly appointed in his church a variety of officers. But this has been done, not to promote distinctions, but to ensure union. This has been ordered on purpose to secure the great end of “perfecting the saints,” of bringing all believers unto the same belief, the same knowledge of the Son of God, the same complete holiness of life, here significantly called “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” But when will the day arrive for us to be all thus full grown in holiness and love? When shall we cease to be the sport of idle controversy, to be the prey of interested deceivers? When shall we be united to one another no less firmly than members of one body; the joints all firm, the limbs all sound, all working together for mutual good, all following in all things the direction of Him “which is the head?”

Our way and means thereto are clearly laid down in these few striking words, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Nay they are more briefly set forth, and scarce less fully, in this other expression of the apostle, “speaking the truth in love.” We must cleave to the truth in our minds. We must recommend it by charity in our words. We must endeavour to hold fast that faith once delivered to the saints, which whilst errors may be countless, can be only one. But the bond by which we keep it must be peace. No force but that of lowliness and meekness, no constraint must be employed in our holy cause, but that of long suffering and kind forbearance. With these St. Paul begins what he had to say upon this subject, with recommending as means towards our union, these particulars of Christian love. And love is still the last word he has to write, when he has enlarged on the advantages of our being united. Have we yet tried this method thoroughly? Have we manifested towards those who differ from us, this humility, meekness, kindness? Have we felt affection? Have our hearts glowed with the warmth of unfeigned desire to be one with them, and they with us? or are we not often tempted to feel glad that we are apart, each proud of his own position, ready to raise, instead of remove, the barriers of separation, and to plead that we are contending for the truth, when all that we feel really to be at stake is our own credit, interest, or success?

God grant that we may long for unity! God help us to promote it by charity! God preserve us in that truth which can be but one! God bring us to that heaven where there is room for all!

That we must put off the old man, and put on the new.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the ¹|| blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. *

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and † true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man

truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have ‡ to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good § to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And ² be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

¹ Rom. 1. 21.

|| Or, hardness.

† Or, holiness of truth.

‡ Or, to distribute.

§ Or, to edify profitably.

* 2 Cor. 2. 10.

§ 562. *That we must advance in holiness, as well as avoid sin.*

See to what the vanity of our minds would bring us, if we had not rightly learned Christ! See what warnings, what words of exhortation, St. Paul thought necessary, even for those who had been taught "as the truth is in Jesus." We are still liable to sin. We are still within reach of being tempted to walk, as the rest of the Gentiles walk; as they walk who are not yet Christians. Nay, are we not surrounded in this Christian land by numbers who thus walk? Can we shut our eyes upon the many instances of men, whose understanding, in all things relating to God's will, seems to be covered with thick darkness; who, through this ignorance, are strangers to the heavenly life they ought to lead; whose ignorance comes of blindness in the heart; who seem to have outgrown all sense of shame, in the greediness with which they rush into sensual excesses, those corrupt and deceitful lusts, which promise pleasure for a time, but yield only pain for ever. God forbid that we should cease to feel most deep concern for these our offending brethren! God forbid that we should witness their offences, without considering how precious is our privilege, in having better learnt of Christ, how tenfold shameful if we fall is our fall; if we, through presumption or inconstancy, should be guilty of the sins which we ought to loathe and abhor!

But not only must we not walk in the sins of the heathen; we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. Not only must we "put off concerning the former conversation the old man," we must "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." To put away lying is not enough; we must also speak every man truth with his neighbour. We must not only never wilfully deceive, but we must come forward to say the whole of what is true; we must be free to testify that which we do know, whether it be in God's cause, or in the cause of man, though it be to our own harm. It is not enough to steal no more. We must labour, working whether with hand or mind, the thing which is good; we must be diligent, patient, and laborious, in order that we may have to give to him that needeth. It is not enough that no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, nothing which tends to corrupt the hearers or ourselves. There must issue thence a fountain of holy conversation, even "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." We must speak always out of heavenly motives, often of heavenly things. We must speak always on a Christian principle; oftentimes concerning the love of God manifested in Christ dying for us, the gift of the Spirit, the pleasures of holiness, the hope of heaven.

And so likewise in anger, that passion which of all others is of most frequent occurrence, it is not enough not to sin in being angry, not to harbour anger, not to yield in this evil temper to the suggestions of Satan; it is not enough to put away all bitterness, all wrath, all malice. We must add to this much more. We must be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. God has not merely put away our sins. He has given us for the present grace and hope, peace and joy in believing, and hereafter life everlasting. Thus must we forgive, thus must we give unto each other; thus freely, thus affectionately, thus bountifully, thus for Christ's sake. And also it must be out of regard to the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we are "sealed unto the day of redemption." His impression is upon us. Let us watch that the seal be safe. Let us watch that we grieve not Him who has enabled us so greatly to rejoice.

That we must walk in love, not in uncleanness.

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of || disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

|| Or, unbelief.

† Or, discovered.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are † reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15 ‡ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

‡ 1s. 60. 1.

‡ Col. 4. 5.

§ 563. *Spiritual wakefulness, and circumspection.*

Because "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us," Eph. 4. 32, therefore we must be "followers of God, as dear children," imitating the gracious dealings of our Father, and thankfully walking in the steps of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But how far from such giving of thanks as this, how far are the evil practices here spoken of, these pollutions of the flesh and of the spirit, the love of filthy pleasure, or the love of filthy lucre, "fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness!" These are things never to be named among saints, never to be spoken of in our common conversation; lest the mere mention of them should stir up evil thoughts. For these are things on which the mind is intent by nature, things on which the tongue is prone to talk, the ears to listen, and the mind to dwell. And because our corrupted nature is apt to lead us into these iniquities, there are many who hence argue that they are not so very sinful; many, who with vain words would deceive us, if we are so foolish as to suffer them. Let us mark then the plain testimony here borne by St. Paul to the contrary. These things "are not convenient." They are not agreeable to our Christian vows. They are not agreeable to our Christian privileges. They are not agreeable to our Christian hopes. And further, "because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Now it was to save us from this wrath that Christ died. It was to save us from these sins. And not only did He deliver us from wrath, He gave us an inheritance in heaven. And this we know, "that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

"Be not ye therefore partakers with them." Renounce all partnership in their evil traffic. Their merchandise is sin. Their gain is endless misery. Renounce the deeds of darkness, and "walk as children of light." The one is not enough without the other. You must not only abhor evil; you must cleave to that which is good. See Rom. 12. 9. You must prove, "what is acceptable unto the Lord," recommending it by your lives. Besides having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," you must "reprove them." And though "it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret," you may administer reproof by deeds if not by words; you must, by your pure and heavenly life, put to shame their worldly conversation. For as it is light that disperses the darkness, so it is by truth that we can best put falsehood to the blush, by our self denial, sensuality, by our heavenly tempers, a worldly mind. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For here the same image is employed. It is night with sinners; and their souls are heavy with sleep. Or they are awake, but slothful, and unwilling to arise. Or they are dead in trespasses and sins. But Christ is as the Sun of Righteousness to shine into their heart to pierce the veil of their ignorance, to revive in them the powers of the soul, to give them light and life. "See then that ye walk circumspectly," for it is darkness all around. "Not as fools," ignorantly listening to the vain words of the deceitful; "but as wise," as enlightened by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Redeeming the time," using the opportunity of life for its proper end, setting it free from the abuses of the world; "because the days are evil," because sin besets us, because death awaits us, because the world entices us, the flesh rebels, and our adversary the devil is watching to devour us.

God give us light to see our danger, and strength to prevail against our enemy! God help us to renounce the works of darkness, to reprove them by a life of holiness, yea to prove in our own lives "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!" Rom. 12. 2.

Against drunkenness. Duties of husbands and wives.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

§ 564. *The spiritual marriage of Christ with his church.*

How seasonably does the apostle here intreat us to be "understanding what the will of the Lord is!" How largely does he help us to understand it! How forcibly has he already in this chapter warned us against one kind of profligacy! How plainly does he here denounce another, no less frequently thought excusable in the world! "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." Let no man then deceive us with vain words. Drunkenness is sin. Drunkenness is one of the things for which the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. See ver. 6. And here again observe, it is not enough to be not drunken. We must delight in far other pleasures: we must be filled with the Spirit. And instead of the loud mirth, profane singing, and fierce strife, which usually accompany drunkenness, we ought to speak to ourselves "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;" we ought to sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord, we ought to give thanks always for all things unto God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; we ought to submit ourselves "one to another in the fear of God."

Wives especially may here learn that they ought to submit themselves unto their own husbands. For in marriage is represented the spiritual union which is between Christ and his church. And as He is the head and Saviour to his body the church, so is the husband in authority over the wife; and so ought the wife to be in every thing subject unto the husband, even as the church to Christ. What an effectual antidote is here provided against that tendency to strife, which often embitters the most near and dear of domestic ties! What a lesson for all members of Christ's church, that they ought to have their wills in subjection unto Christ, even as a wife unto a husband!

But if the wife must submit unto the husband's rule, the husband is here instructed no less plainly that he must rule with submission to the will of the Lord, may with deference also to the wishes of the wife. For did not Christ so love his church as to give Himself for it? Was it not his object to sanctify it and cleanse it, by his ordinance of baptism, in that solemn form of words, that He might make us a peculiar people zealous of good works? See Tit. 2. 14. And how can husbands in like manner love their wives; if they spare any pains or self denial in maintaining the affection of their wives? "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." For so has Christ loved us, even as Himself. So has the Lord loved and cherished the church, even as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Mysterious similitude, here graciously revealed to the apostle, to teach us both our duty to each other, and our duty to our Lord; to shew husbands how they ought to love their wives, and Christians how Christ has loved them! What can be more mysterious than that affection, which shall cause a man to leave father and mother, and be joined as one flesh to one before a stranger? What but that Christ should leave the mansions of his Father's glory, for the sake of presenting to Himself his spotless church, to be one with Him, and He one with us! How great must have been his love for us! How devout must be our submission unto Him! How ought every Christian husband to learn from this heavenly mystery, so to love his wife even as himself! How ought every Christian wife hence to look to it that she reverence her husband.

God grant that we all in our several relations may do our duty to each other, out of reverence for our Lord! God grant that however close may be our union with all others, we may above all things desire to be one with Christ!

Duties of children, parents, servants, and masters.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

|| Or, moderating.

6 Not with eye service, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, || forbearing threatening: knowing that ~~†~~ your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

† Some read, both your and their master.

§ 565. *That we must do all as unto the Lord.*

How delightful is the harmony of a Christian family, in which every member is guided by the directions here given by St. Paul! How different is the case where no such influence prevails! Where God's word is not the rule, where God's grace is not the strength, how plainly may be seen in domestic unhappiness the insufficiency of mere natural affection. Children, wayward, wilful, and perverse. Parents now spoiling them by fond indulgence, now alienating their affection by oppressive punishment. Servants doing as little for their masters and as much for themselves as they can contrive, indifferent whether they stay or go, wasteful, deceitful, idle, intemperate. Masters ruling by threats, expecting more than reasonable attention to their wants and wishes, and making no allowance for the feelings of their servants. Add to this the frequent struggle for the mastery between master and mistress, husband and wife, whose will ought to be as one. And we have then a just notion of the common case of families where the fear of God is set at nought, where the love of Christ is not predominant. However fine the house may shew without, however well it may be swept and garnished within, it is the abode of pride and selfishness, of injustice, unkindness, wrath, and discontent; it is not the abode of happiness or of peace.

But now see how great is the alteration which comes of obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even as it is set forth by St. Paul in this Epistle. How true would be the affection, how close the union between husband and wife, has been already shewn. How equally sincere would be the love subsisting between parents and children, masters and servants, is here pointed out. And here also all depends on this one principle, all is to be done "as to the Lord." All is to be done as service due to Christ, as homage which we owe to Him, and which we rejoice to pay to Him, as a free will offering of love, which we present with thankful hearts unto Him who to us is every thing. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." It is right that you pay this due respect of honour and obedience unto your father and mother upon earth. It is right that you do it out of devout affection to your Almighty Parent in the heavens. And this is the very earliest and first to be put in practice, of all the duties we have to do in this present life. And therefore has God made mention of it, and added to this commandment a promise of long life, in that comprehensive summary of his will concerning us, which He revealed from heaven to the children of Israel. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Watch over your own tempers that you aggravate not theirs. For anger is like a consuming fire, that first kindles what is nigh to it, and then destroys. Receive therefore your little ones in the name of Christ, with the same kindness and gentleness which you owe unto your Lord, teaching and training them, chastening or encouraging them, just as you might suppose that Christ would best approve.

Servants too must serve as unto Christ; and must be obedient to their masters upon earth, because they fear to displease their Lord which is in heaven, because they love to please Him, who gave Himself for all, whether bond or free, and through whom alone either slave, servant, or master, can receive any good thing at the hand of God. And masters in like manner, must in the treatment of their servants, remember that they also have a Master which is in heaven; with whom there is no respect of persons, and who will call them to account hereafter for the way in which they now treat these their fellow servants. Let them therefore give that which is just and equal, not only to the good, but also to the froward. And let servants be obedient and attached, not only to the kind, but also to the hard master. Let parents be patient with the most perverse of children; and children dutiful to the most negligent of parents. For in any case, the Lord is still the same, all just, all kind, all good. Him we are in any case still bound to serve. Him it is our greatest gain in any case to serve freely, cheerfully. And the less returns we meet with from those we live amongst on earth, we may feel so much the more sure, if we do our duty unto God, to have the reward of our Father which is in heaven.

Christian armour against spiritual enemies.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *||* spiritual wickedness in *†* high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *‡* having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword

|| Or, wicked spirits.

† Or, heavenly.

‡ Or, having overcome all.

§ Or, in a chain.

¶ Or, thereof.

** Or, with incorruption.*

of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 For which I am an ambassador in *§* bonds: that *¶* therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ *** in sincerity. Amen.

§ 566. *The duty of praying for each other.*

"Finally, my brethren," after well weighing all that has been said of God's love for us, and of the love we owe to Him, "finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." It is only "in the Lord" that we can "be strong." It is only "in the power of his might" that we can do the things here enjoined. Of ourselves we are weak, naked, defenceless. We must seek for strength from Him. We must put on his armour. And it must be all his armour. One part will not suffice without the other. The girdle without the breast plate, the shield without the sword, or both without the helmet, will not enable us to stand against an enemy so fierce, so powerful, as we have to contend with. It is "the devil." It is the evil spirit who desires to make us miserable for ever. It is against him we wrestle, against him and against his angels, "principalities" as they here are called by reason of the rank they fell from; "powers," having still influence allowed them for a time; "rulers of the darkness of this world," because they use their influence to promote ignorance and iniquity; "spiritual wickedness in high places," because they are wicked spirits, dwelling in that world unseen, which is altogether above out of our reach. And yet they can reach us; aye, and do reach us. They reach our minds, there suggesting evil thoughts. They reach our hearts, there raising evil desires. They reach our bodies, there adding to the temptations which otherwise arise from flesh and blood. They reach our souls, there instilling pride and presumption, high esteem of ourselves, scorn of our brethren, and unthankful regards towards God.

These then are the enemies with whom we have to wrestle, not only against our own corrupted nature. And the assistances provided for us by God are these, truth, righteousness, the preparation of the Gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, and watchfulness in prayer. This armour will enable us both to defend ourselves, and also to put our adversary to flight. We can both protect ourselves against his fiery darts, and also inflict wounds upon him, to his shame and pain, and to the glory of our Lord. Let us then be girt about with truth, being sincere in all things, in our words, in our deeds, and above all, in our religion. Let us wear righteousness high unto our hearts, desiring to be entirely righteous if we could, and thankful to have been counted so for Christ's sake, even though through our frailty we in all things fail. And having our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Not one step let us take without the Gospel for our support, that Gospel which will prevent us from wandering into error, or from falling whilst we are in the right way, that Gospel which teaches us the way of peace, peace with God, and peace within ourselves, peace here, and peace for ever. "Above all, taking the shield of faith," for else we cannot escape, much less conquer. Without faith we shall be at the mercy of our enemy. Without faith in the atonement of the death of Christ, we stand guilty, as Satan would fain have us, in the sight of God; we fall an easy prey to his devices, we are pierced through by his fiery darts. The shield protects the body, the helmet the head. Our helmet is salvation, the hope of salvation, the confident persuasion that we have been forgiven for Christ's sake, and that through Christ we shall live for ever. The sword is for the wounding of our enemy, as well as for warding off his blows. Our sword is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Let us use it as did our Lord when He was tempted. Let us bethink ourselves of some passage that applies to our temptation. Let us therewith encourage our own hearts, and therewith put to flight our enemy.

But all this, let us remember, is God's armour, not our own. He alone can give it us. He will give it us only if we ask. And therefore we must pray continually; and watch continually unto prayer. We must pray with watchfulness and perseverance, not only for ourselves, "but for all saints." For thus if we all pray in earnest for all others, as well as for ourselves, the armoury of God will open to our supplications, our hands will be strengthened, our defence made good, our victory accomplished.

St. Paul would especially have the Ephesians pray for himself. This is the only favour he asks of them. This is the boon for which we might most properly make interest with one another. Give me a place not at your feast but in your prayers; not in your show of worldly vanity, but in the outpouring of your hearts' affection before the throne of grace. This is the kind of comfort the apostle asks for. This is the kind of comfort he imparts to the Ephesians. He sends, indeed, also Tychicus to tell them of his affairs. But he sends first his petitions unto God, that there may be peace "to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." He prays that there may be "grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." He prays then for us also, if we sincerely love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God has promised, that for such there shall be grace. God has promised; and therefore the apostle prays. Let us also pray for the very things which God has promised to give. We pray, not for his information. He best knows what we want. We pray, not with a view to change his purposes. He is not a man that He should repent. We pray, because He has bidden us. We pray, because our Lord has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Matt. 7. 7. "Amen." Lord, let us ask as Thou wouldst have us. Let us receive that which Thou desirest to give us! Let us pray for grace! Let us pray for grace in behalf of all men! Let us watch unto prayer! Let us pray always!

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, 1. 1—18.

St. Paul writeth of his thankfulness and prayers in his bonds.

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you¹ will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because² I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are³ partakers of my grace.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all⁴ judgment;

10 That ye may⁵ approve things that⁶ are excellent;

that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds⁷ in Christ are manifest in all the⁸ palace, and⁹ in all other places;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

¹ Or, mention.

² Or, will finish it.

³ Or, you have me in your heart.

⁴ Or, partakers with me of grace.

⁵ Or, sense.

⁶ Or, try.

⁷ Or, differ.

⁸ Or, for Christ.

⁹ Or, Cesar's court.

¹⁰ Or, to all others.

§ 567. *That we must in any case rejoice if Christ be preached.*

The church at Philippi appears to have been one of the most flourishing, that is to say, one of the most eminent in faith and love, of all which were founded by St. Paul. For in this Epistle we find no note of censure, no reproof for sin, but only thankfulness for progress already made, with exhortation unto further proficiency. Happy is that Christian to whose enlightened apprehension and sanctified life, the word of God presents not so much conviction of sin, as motives unto increase in holiness. Happy were the Philippians, and especially their ministers, of whatsoever order or degree; for whom St. Paul, every time he remembered them, felt cause to thank his God! Always in every prayer of his for them, he made his request with joy. He prayed for them, not with sorrow of heart, as for sinners whose condition filled him with apprehension; but with rejoicing of the spirit, as for saints, of whom he was confident, that God, who had begun in them so excellent a work, would also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Happy are they in whose behalf the ministers of the Gospel can now feel such confidence as this! Happy are we, if we can feel it, if we have ground for feeling it for ourselves; if we desire, and endeavour, and have good reason to feel it in behalf of each other.

And how may we best attain unto this joyful conviction? How was it that St. Paul came thus to think of the Philippians? First, there was the fact that God had begun in them a good work. Proficiency already attained is the first ground on which to build our hope of further attainments. The next point is affection in our own hearts towards them in whose behalf we hope. "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart." And again, "for God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." "Charity hopeth all things." 1 Cor. 13. 7. Love for our fellow Christians, glowing in our hearts, will help greatly towards giving us a good hope in their behalf. And the more we hope in earnest, we shall the more in earnest help, we shall the more in earnest pray for their spiritual prosperity. And this is the way in which the apostle cherished his confidence in regard to the Philippians; not trusting so as to work the less, but to his trust adding all means in his power for the accomplishment of that on which he reckoned. Therefore he wrote this Epistle. Therefore he expressed this confidence, that it might raise a good hope, and stir up renewed exertions in those to whom he wrote. And therefore he offered up this prayer in their behalf, that their "love might abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." And like to this must be our conduct, if we have Christian confidence; the more we trust, we must

the more labour and the more pray. The more we trust, either for our brethren or for ourselves, we must strive the more earnestly at the throne of grace; we must pray the more fervently for the increase both of love and of knowledge, both that we may know what is good from what is evil, and that we may do the one and avoid the other; both that we may be "without offence," and also be "filled with the fruits of righteousness," fruits which we owe not to our own labour, and for which we must not take praise unto ourselves; for they "are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

St. Paul wrote this Epistle from Rome, where he had been for some time detained as a prisoner. And he was anxious to shew the Philippians that this his bondage, instead of proving a hindrance, had "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." For by this means he had been able to make known the truth in the chief places, and amongst the chief persons in that city; and to recommend it by the patience, meekness, and cheerfulness, with which he suffered imprisonment for Christ's sake. And hence also the brethren were encouraged to speak the word without fear; learning from his example to make light of the afflictions of this present world, for the sake of preaching the Gospel of Christ. Some indeed, who were hostile to St. Paul, took occasion from his confinement, to bestir themselves more actively in making converts to the Gospel, with a view to gaining over numbers to their own respective parties, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. These probably were such as held the necessity of circumcision, or some other out of the various false doctrines which are apt to pass current in the company of truth. But little did they know of the apostle's temper, little did they understand his zeal for the Gospel, if they thought to wound his feelings by any measure which enlarged the kingdom of his Lord. "What then?" he remarks, "notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." He rejoiced not in the envy and strife. He rejoiced not in the pretence. He rejoiced not in the divisions which were likely to ensue. For these he mourned. Against these he often and earnestly elsewhere protests. But in the preaching of Christ, as far as by any means his Gospel was preached effectively, as far as by any means sinners were really converted from the error of their way, brought from ignorance to the knowledge of the truth, and from sin to holiness and life; in this St. Paul rejoiced, in this he would have us rejoice. In the midst, therefore, of the scandalous divisions which still rend the community of professing Christians, in the midst of the heart sickening envyings, jealousies, and strife, which still proclaim to an unbelieving world that we Christians are far from one, let us observe with thankfulness and joy, how many are brought nigh unto the kingdom of heaven, even by those who preach Christ out of pretence or contention. We cannot too deeply grieve for their pretence. We cannot too heartily mourn for their contention. But neither can we too greatly rejoice in any real success they have; in any fruit of faith and love which God makes to follow on their preaching. His is all the glory. Theirs is all the sin. Theirs; and ours also, if we are contentious; if it be more out of rivalry with each other, than out of love for Christ that we preach, or in any way promote the Gospel. Oh that all who receive our Gospel, would work together in one spirit! Oh that all who preach one Christ, would preach Christ always out of love!

St. Paul trusteth that he shall glorify Christ.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall

abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

§ 568. *Spiritual courage.*

We have here all the blessings of the Gospel summed up in a few short words: "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." A holy life, and a happy death. Happiness in living, happiness in dying, happiness in that which is after death. This was St. Paul's view of his own case. He knew that all things would work together for his good, he had an earnest expectation and hope that in nothing he should be ashamed, He was full of trust at the present, and he trusted that he should be full of trust for the future. How much to be desired is any anxiety at all for our everlasting welfare! How many are content with what on earth they can enjoy, without thought of the necessity of caring for the soul! What, can we be within a moment of eternity, and not care to know what our eternity will be? Do we own that we must be either happy for ever, or miserable without end, and yet take no anxious thought to know which of the two will be our lot, to know it with a view to securing for ourselves the best that is within our reach? Few things will more move us to take pains, than the persuasion that our pains will not be lost. Few things will more help us to rejoice, than an earnest expectation and hope that in nothing we shall be put to shame by the enemy of souls, that Christ will be magnified by us in all things, "whether it be by life, or by death."

For see how dispiriting it is to think beforehand that we are sure to fall! See how encouraging it is to live under the impression that our death will certainly be gain! To be so sure of heaven, and yet so eager to do good on earth, that we know not which to choose; to feel our happiness so great in either case, that we are in a strait between two; to have an earnest desire to depart, and to have it qualified not by the fear of sinning, not by the dread of punishment, but only by the desire to be continued to our brethren for their "furtherance and joy of faith;" thus it is that to live is Christ, and to them which so live to die is gain. The two cannot be separated. We cannot be sure of dying to our gain unless we live to Christ. Unless we live as He would have us, unless we live a life of love, of love for Christ, and love for all our brethren, we must not expect to find our gain in death. Far be from us all false presumption! Far be from us all unworthy fear! Far be from us the spirit of bondage, that would make us not so much averse to sinning as apprehensive that we shall sin! Far be from us all selfish anxiety to enjoy in haste our own endless joy, when we might better wait awhile on earth, better for God's glory, better for the good of our fellow creatures!

But alas who is in haste for heaven at all? How few! How seldom hear we any mention of death as gain! How many look on it as the worst of evils! How rare is that faith, how scarce that love, which would enable us at once to count heaven for our own, and to be willing for a while to forego it ourselves, that we may help our brethren to attain unto the same glorious inheritance! For this is the good we ought to aim at imparting; this is the only benefit in prospect, which would make it worth while to live; this was the object which led St. Paul to conclude that he should be somewhat longer spared to the Philippians, that their rejoicing might "be more abundant in Jesus Christ," that their conversation might be "as it becometh the gospel of Christ." Let us in like manner encourage and exhort one another to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Let us bid one another be in nothing terrified, and be in nothing terrified ourselves by our adversaries, the spiritual enemies who would destroy our souls. Let us cherish and promote that courage which they may count in us for a token of perdition, but which we reckon to be a proof of God's work in the soul, with a view to our salvation. And whatever we may suffer from adversaries on earth, or from the assaults of wicked spirits against the soul, let us esteem it a privilege to have the same conflict with the apostle, even to suffer here for Christ.

St. Paul exhorteth to unity and humility.

1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing *be done* through strife or vain glory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the *likeness* of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

|| Or, *habit*.

§ 569. *God's help is our great encouragement.*

Though St. Paul could rejoice, if in any way Christ was preached, yet he earnestly desired that we should all "be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind." And this he calls fulfilling his joy, so entirely did his joys arise from that which was conducive to the saving of souls and to the honour of his heavenly Master. Would that our chief delight might always thus consist in that which gives glory unto God! Would that we might thus long to be likeminded, and to make as many as we can to have the same love, and to be of one accord and of one mind! Would that we might truly experience, what consolation there is in Christ, what comfort in love, how precious is the fellowship of the Spirit, how sweet it is to have our hearts yearn with affection for our brethren, how sweet to think God has shewed mercy upon all men.

Let then "nothing be done through strife or vain glory." For these are the springs of nearly all our differences. "But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." For thus should we be more apt to submit ourselves to each other in the fear of God. Thus should we more carefully observe that subjection to such as are in authority, which is one chief provision towards unity in the church. "Look not every man on his own things," on his own knowledge, judgment, or ability; "but every man also on the things of others," on the advantages, and claims, and opinions of his brethren. For by allowing them their due weight, putting ourselves in the situation of others, and considering how we should ourselves have acted in their place, we shall more readily attain to being humble, in seeing our own errors, instead of censorious in denouncing theirs. And these rules we may most profitably apply to many things besides the furtherance of unity in religion. In many things, nay in all, we must be more ready to see faults in ourselves than in our brethren.

But above all, let us in this and in all other matters, endeavour to have in us the very same mind "which was also in Christ Jesus." See how great was his condescension! See how He humbled Himself! See how high He was from all eternity, even in the form of God! even in such sort the eternal Son of God, that He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God!" See next how He made Himself for our sakes low, how "he was despised, and we esteemed him not!" Isa. 53. 3. See how when He "was made in the likeness of men," He "took upon him the form of a servant!" See how "he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This is the pattern for our humility! This is the rule we are to live by, in our loving one another. And would we know what will be the fruit of our obedience, of our following our Saviour's steps? See then further how highly God exalted Him! See how it is ordained that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of all beings in heaven, in earth, and under the earth; and how every tongue should confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

Let us then follow the example of our Lord. Let us obey the exhortation of his apostle. Let us do what he here enjoins, as a part of that heavenly work, which is described as working out our own salvation. God is ready to work in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Else indeed we might despond. Else we might despair. Else we could have no reason to expect success. But if God be with us, who can be against us? If God help, who can hinder? Now we may have a good hope, a good courage. Now we may with good ground of reason feel assured of victory. And yet how tenfold grievous must be our failure, if now we fail! With what tenfold fear and trembling must we now apprehend the risk of failing!

God give us that salutary fear which helps to keep us humble, together with that courage which fills us full with hope! God grant that we may fear nothing so much as his displeasure! God grant that we may hope all things by reason of his love!

Of Timotheus, and Epaphroditus.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and || harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom † ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I ‡ be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

19 § But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man ¶ likeninded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

¶ Or, sincere. † Or, shine ye. ‡ Gr. poured forth. § Or, Moreover. ¶ Or, so dear unto me. * Or, honour such.

§ 570. *What characters are most to be esteemed.*

To "do all things without murmurings and disputings" is one way towards being "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke." We must neither murmur against God, nor dispute amongst each other. For what can be further from our duty as children than to find fault with the dispensations of our heavenly Father? And what can more expose us to rebuke from Him, than that we should wrangle and contend with one another? See how eminent is our calling, how important our office, to "shine as lights in the world," "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." As the heavens declare the glory of God, as there is nothing hid from the heat of the sun, see Ps. 19. 1, 6, so ought our Christian life and conversation to tell it out among all beholders, that the Lord is our God, and that we are not ashamed of Christ and of his words; so ought the influence of our Christian love to dispel all doubts, to silence all murmurs and disputes, and to shed abroad amongst all within our reach the light of truth, the warmth of charity. Thus might we hold forth the word of life. Thus might we add to the joy of St. Paul in the day of Christ, if we profit by his labours, if we help to shew that he did not run nor labour in vain.

How cheerfully, how thankfully, does St. Paul here speak of the advantages to arise from his self devotion! Yet how carefully does he elsewhere guard against having his own services, however faithful, confounded in the apprehension of his converts, with the inestimable value of the death of Christ! "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" 1 Cor. 1. 13. How carefully ought we to watch also, that our joy in Christ's service lead us not to think too highly of our services; that whilst we rejoice, and bid each other also to have joy in the faith which we help to spread abroad amongst mankind, we still give all the glory unto Him who alone giveth the increase.

St. Paul, when he would send Timothy to the Philippians, sends with him this high character, that he was likeninded unto himself, caring with the natural affection of a parent for the state of the Philippians. And in this he presented a delightful contrast to the spirit which animates the generality of mankind. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." This was the case in the time of the apostle. Is not this also the case amongst ourselves? Do not all, or nearly all, look more to their own profit or pleasure, than to advancing the kingdom of their Saviour? Happy are they who, like Timotheus, care for others as well as for themselves, and care for others for the sake of Christ! Happy are they who, like Epaphroditus, minister to the wants, and grieve for the sorrows of their brethren! He had been sick nigh unto death. And he was full of heaviness, not because of his own sickness, but because the Philippians had heard that he had been sick. Well might St. Paul bid them to receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and to hold such in reputation. Do we follow these directions? Do we hold in reputation such as these? Do we value and love above all others of mankind those who most love their Lord; those who, for the work of Christ, spare not to be nigh unto death, not regarding their lives, so that they may be helpful for Christ's sake to the health or to the eternal life of their brethren? Oh how much more of real greatness, how much more of real goodness, might we discern in such zeal and charity as this, than in the deeds of violence, or the gifts of ostentation, which most commonly are reckoned for illustrious, which most commonly have obtained the names of good and great!

St. Paul's ground of confidence.

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.* To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more :

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith :

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

§ 571. *That we must count all things loss for Christ.*

In this passage we may see how different is true Christian faith from that which was pretended by false teachers, here called "dogs," as tearing to pieces the church, "evil workers," because they did more harm than good by their exertions, "the concision," because they taught the necessity of circumcision according to the flesh, instead of that which was in the heart and in the spirit. Of these St. Paul warns us to beware. And, at the same time, he tells us to "rejoice in the Lord;" and teaches us, that the true circumcision are they which "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." These therefore are the doctrines which he would have us keep safe. It was in order to our safe possession of them that he set down in writing what he had before been used to preach. And it is only by holding fast unto this precious faith, that we can ourselves be safe in the day of the Lord.

See then how great is the difference between having confidence in the flesh, and rejoicing in the Lord. The apostle tells us how strong were his own grounds of having confidence in the flesh. He had been circumcised on the eighth day, as appointed in the Law. See Gen. 17. 10, 12. He was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews;" not merely a proselyte, but a literal descendant of the father of the faithful, through Jacob and Benjamin. He was a Pharisee, the most strict sect of the Jews. He had proved his zeal in behalf of these his privileges and principles, both by persecuting the Christian church, and by exact fulfilment of all the ordinances of the Law. So that if any man could have been justified by the works of the Law, he might have been sure of safety. And fully persuaded he was in his own mind at the time, that in these things he had great gain. And so are also they who now trust in their good works, in themselves, that they are righteous. So are also they who trust in their possessions on the earth. So are also they who trust in their fair character with men. These all count for gain what they ought to count for loss, in comparison with the advantage of gaining Christ. They suppose themselves to be rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. See Rev. 3. 17.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." This is the way we ought to think of our natural advantages. This is the light in which we ought to view our worldly possessions. How much more ought we thus to count for loss our former mistaken notions of the truth! If we have been used to think that by our own exertions we could save ourselves, let us now reckon our best service to be unprofitable. If we have been used to trust partly in our Saviour, and partly in ourselves, let us now learn that He only is our strength, and we have been losing, not gaining, by all reliance which we have placed upon ourselves. To "win Christ," this is that which by its preciousness makes all other things to be counted mere dross and refuse. To "win Christ," this is that which we must hold for the chief object of our desire. To "win Christ, and be found in him," not having our own righteousness, "which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," that righteousness which God, for Christ's sake, imputes to or counts to be in believers. This is real righteousness. For that which God counts, is. Oh that we may believe what He requires us, and we should then be what He offers to esteem us! We should then know our Lord as He really is. We should then cheerfully partake of his sufferings, with a view to partake of his resurrection. We should then be glad to be made conformable to his death, if by any means we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

God grant that we may be ready to count all things but loss for Christ's sake! God grant that whatever we lose on earth, we may gain in heaven eternal life, and rejoice in the Lord alway!

Exhortations to be like minded and heavenly minded.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I *do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is *their* belly; and *whose* glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

§ 572. *The excellency of our Christian inheritance.*

St. Paul having been led to mention how he counted all things loss for the sake of Christ, and how earnestly he desired to attain unto the resurrection of the dead, now guards against being understood to express himself with any thing like presumptuous confidence: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." He would not be thought to say that he was all that Christ would have him, no, nor that he had infallibly secured all that Christ had to give him. By no means; he was still following after, with a view to obtain that for which also he had been himself pressed into the service of his Master. He was reaching forth to what he had yet to do, setting no store by that which he had done already. He was pressing on as in a race for the prize; his prize the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And the nearer we are to perfect, the more he would have us to "be thus minded," to esteem ourselves still deficient. And if we have not yet thus learned to abase ourselves, there is still at least one great lesson to be revealed to us by God. So that it would be one sign of our being perfect, if we were to feel that we are not so already. And, on the other hand, to reckon that we have already attained, is a sure sign that we have not.

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Whatsoever be our proficiency, whether large or small, this is the way towards our advancing further, agreement, unanimity. We must be of one mind, and that the right mind. We must be followers together of St. Paul, even as he was of Christ. We must beware of following the many who walk otherwise. See how St. Paul tells us of them, even weeping, that they are "the enemies of the cross of Christ." What an awful condition, to be at enmity with the cross, to be at enmity with Him who hung thereon! to put no trust in Christ crucified! to hate the glorious truth, that He died for us men, and for our salvation! And why is this doctrine hateful to the natural heart of man? Not only because it is humbling, but also because it is most purifying, it is most forcible to constrain to holiness of life, and to a heavenly mind. The enemies of the cross of Christ are the same as they "whose God is their belly," and "who mind earthly things." Their "glory is in their shame." So often do they boast of that which is their very chief disgrace! Their "end is destruction." So surely does their course of life end in misery, both in this world and in that which is to come! These then are they whose example we must avoid. Far be it from us to be of one mind with these!

No; let us look to those whose "conversation is in heaven;" let us mark them, in order to mind the same thing with them. Citizens they are of a heavenly country, looking for the appearance of their King from thence. He is gone before to prepare a place for them. He is coming to fetch them, to dwell there with Himself. They know that He is coming. They live as if He were coming. They "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." They watch for his arriving. They expect that when He comes He will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Vile as sin has made us, thoroughly as it has debased us, deeply as it has degraded both body and soul, yet Christ can "subdue all things unto himself." He will raise the body from corruption, He will make it like unto his own, He will give both to body and to soul a glorious immortality. What would we wish for more than to be made like to Him who is the express image of the Father? What language can more forcibly convey to us the notion of most exalted happiness, than that we shall be joint heirs with Christ in that glory which is his for ever? Shall we any longer deign to make our bodies vile, when we expect that He will make them glorious? Can we any longer bear to abuse them, by sloth or sensual excess, when it is the purpose of our Lord and Saviour that they should be holy and heavenly as his own? Oh let us rejoice to think to what great privileges we are admitted, to what great joy we are called, of what all sufficient grace we are partakers, of what all surpassing glory we are heirs!

St. Paul exhorteth to steadfastness in all good things.

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by

prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things:

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

|| Or, venerable.

§ 573. *Of the peace of God keeping our hearts and minds.*

See how the apostle strives to win us by affection! "Brethren, dearly beloved and longed for," he calls us; his "joy and crown," his "dearly beloved." Let us try whether we cannot, by means like these, win our brethren, especially to this, that they stand fast in the Lord. See how he beseeches Euodias, and beseeches Syntyche, when no doubt he had authority to command them! Let us use the same means towards the same good end. Let us prefer beseeching to commanding; let us use intreaty in preference to exercising authority; especially for the purpose of inducing our brethren to "be of the same mind in the Lord." See how he intreats one whom he calls his true yokefellow, probably a joint labourer in the Lord's vineyard at Philippi. Let us in like manner deal with those who are our yokefellow, our partners in the joys and sorrows of life, our husband or wife, brethren or sisters, or fellow servants; let us intreat rather than demand; and let us especially intreat them that they help others rather than ourselves, and of all others especially those "whose names are written in the book of life." Happiest of mankind! Least of all do they need our help. Most of all ought we to be glad to help them. Happiest of mankind; to be enrolled as citizens of that heavenly country, where none know what it is to want; to have a share and interest in that heavenly treasure, which neither rust nor moth corrupt, and which thieves do not break through nor steal. See Matt. 6. 19, 20.

It is to such as these, to such Christians as shall hereafter profit by the death of Christ, it is to these that St. Paul repeats the stirring exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice." See ch. 3. 1. "Let your moderation," he adds, "be known unto all men." For he would not have us triumph to excess. He would not have us proud and presumptuous, but humble, and meek, and soberminded. "The Lord is at hand." We ought daily to expect that He will come to judge the world. We may be sure that if He come not soon to us, it cannot be long ere we go to Him, ere we are taken away by death from this present world, to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This is a reason to be modest in our estimate of ourselves, merciful in our judgments of our neighbours. This is a reason to "be careful for nothing;" to let no troubles we here meet with distract us, to let no wrath or art of our evil enemy terrify us. But "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving," let us make known our requests unto God. He is at hand to hear. His Holy Spirit is at hand to help. Can we believe this, and not ask for his assistance? Can we ask, and not receive? Can we receive, and not give thanks, with thankfulness of heart? Oh how passing all understanding is that peace of God, which thus keeps the hearts and minds of those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity! to refer unto God all their wants, to thank God for all that they receive, to feel in all their trouble that the Lord is at hand, and in their joy to "rejoice in the Lord always!"

But with whom shall this peace of God abide? With those who not only learn, and receive, and hear, and see, whatsoever things God has revealed, but who also "think on these things," who also "do" them. What then are our actions? Yea, what are our thoughts? Which way do our minds run most freely, most willingly? Which way do our thoughts actually run at all? Which way do our lives incline? to what is false, or to what is true? to what is dishonest, or to what is honest? to what is unjust or just, unclean or pure, hateful or lovely, of evil report or of good, to what is blameable and vicious, or to virtue and to praise? Let us look into these particulars. Let us search and see which way we ourselves are bent. Let us strive against the wrong bias of our nature, and pray to be guided into the right way of grace. Let us endeavour to do always what God would have us do, and to think what God would have us think. Then will the God of peace be with us. Then will the peace of God keep our hearts and minds. It passeth all understanding. We cannot comprehend how it is. It is more than the reasonable and natural result of our endeavours to be moderate and joyful. It is the peace of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It is "through Christ Jesus."

St. Paul's contentment, thankfulness, salutations.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me *||* hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

|| Or, is revived.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But *†* I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

† Or, I have received all.

§ 574. *That we must give largely, and for God's glory.*

Among the many striking lessons contained in this Epistle, there is no one more worthy of our attention than this of contentment. And this duty is here set forth in the most affecting manner by St. Paul's example. For it appears, that during the time of his being detained as a prisoner at Rome, he had by some means been left in want of what was needful for his support. But now the Philippians had succoured him again. And for this he sends them thankful praise; expressing his conviction that they had wished to do so all along, but were hindered for lack of opportunity, and shewing them that he was mindful of their having done so oftentimes, since he had departed from Macedonia. Lest, however, they should think that in the interval he had been put to any serious distress, he adds, "not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content." Whether he had much or little, he was sure to have enough, if he was content with what he had. This is true contentment; not the being at ease in the midst of plenty, but the being cheerful in the midst of want; not the being contented when all things prosper, but the being thankful also when all things fail. "I know both how to be abased, and how to abound." And the last is perhaps the hardest of the two; so often do they who have much, still crave for more; so often are they most discontented, who seem to have most ground for contentment.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This was the secret of St. Paul's contentment. This it was which made him satisfied whether in want or in abundance. This, and this alone, can make the rich man happy in his riches, and the poor man no less happy in his poverty. Yes, ye Philippians, the apostle seems to say, I was rich, when for lack of opportunity, ye left me poor. When I was having nothing, I yet possessed all things. See 2 Cor. 6. 10. I felt indeed no less of hunger. But "through Christ which strengtheneth me" I was contented to be hungry. I suffered no less by thirst. But "through Christ which strengtheneth me" I was content to be athirst. I endured no less pain of body for lack of these refreshments, which your kindness so oftentimes supplied. But be not ye afflicted. "Through Christ which strengtheneth me," I was enabled to count my sufferings for joy. Thus was St. Paul content in whatever state he was. Thus would he teach us to be contented.

But let no one here suppose that because the Christian rejoices in tribulation, therefore it is not the duty of his brother Christian to console, assist, relieve him. "Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction." These are the words of the same apostle who was content to be afflicted. It is not that the believer does not feel, but that what he feels he bears with patience. It is not that he is not heir to all the ills of his fellow men, but that he has grace not to murmur when they befall him. There would be no grace in resignation, if there were no pain to be endured. And wherever there is pain, there also is opportunity to relieve it. And we should most of all be glad to extend our help to those who are the most contented to do without it. Let us remember that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20. 35. We are more concerned to see that we rightly give assistance, than the poor are, that they plentifully obtain it. And most earnestly we ought to seek for occasions of doing good unto them who are of the household of faith, of supplying the worldly wants of such as we may best believe to be heirs of heaven. And therefore it was good for the Philippians to supply the wants of St. Paul, that fruit might

abound to their account. For now, when through their bounty he had all that he could want, he assured them that their supply was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God;" and he doubted not that God would in like manner supply all their need, "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Let this then be what we look to, chiefly in our gifts, which way can we offer sacrifice most acceptable unto God through Christ? which way have we best ground to hope that we shall obtain from God, through the same Saviour's merits and intercession, the grace we need, the heavenly riches, the crown of glory, which fadeth not away? See 1 Pet. 5: 4.

"Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." This must be the motive of all our motives, the end of all our ends; God's glory. For this we must be content, when we are in want. For this we must be willing to relieve the needy. For this we must desire to greet and to be greeted, to enjoy and to communicate, as far as in us lies, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:" God's glory; the praise of his goodness, greatness, might, majesty, and dominion. Far above out of our reach is all that concerns Him. We can neither take from the brightness of the light in which He dwells, nor add to it. And yet He has been pleased to have it written in his word that we may in some sort minister to his praise. See Isa. 43. 21.

And certainly we can by no means so effectually do this, as by spreading abroad the glad tidings of redemption through Christ, the grace of our Lord Jesus. May it be with all. "Amen." May it extend throughout all the world! May it be heard by savages in distant lands! May it be received into the heart by Christians at home! "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS, 1. 1—17.

St. Paul giveth thanks, and prayeth, for the Colossians.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints,

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as *it* ~~is~~ in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

† Gr. the Son of his love.

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of *||* his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 ¹ And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

¹ 1 Cor. 8. 6. John 1. 3.

§ 575. *Who it is that gave Himself for us.*

The Epistle to the Colossians, written about the same time as that to the Ephesians, contains many passages of nearly the same force and meaning. Have we laid to heart all that there we read? Then how glad shall we be, to be assured of it again! Have we already forgotten some of it, transgressed some of it? Have we but faintly fulfilled any of it? Then how thankful must we feel that the doctrine is again revealed, the duty again enforced, the motive again pressed on our attention; the motive, the duty, the doctrine, which we might else never sufficiently lay to heart! God now once more help us to understand these words of St. Paul! God grant that we may be meet to be numbered amongst those whom he addresses, "saints and faithful brethren in Christ!"

And see here what great variety is contrived by the apostle, or rather by the Holy Spirit who instructed him to write, what variety in setting forth the same doctrines and duties, the same promises, and threatenings, and commands! Sometimes in his Epistles he exhorts. Sometimes he relates facts. Sometimes he asks questions. Sometimes he prays. Sometimes he gives thanks. Here he does but tell the Colossians of his praying and giving thanks. And yet still there bursts forth the same faithful satement of Christian truth, the same plain directions for Christian practice. For when he tells them of his thankfulness, what is it that he tells them he gives thanks for? What, but their faith in Christ Jesus? What, but their love to all the saints? What, but the hope which is laid up for them in heaven? These then are things most highly to be prized. These are the things we ought to be glad of in each other. These are the things we ought to value in ourselves. Oh how is it that we so readily express our joy in the worldly prosperity of our brethren, and are so slow to take interest in their spiritual progress? How are we so eager to tell abroad the tidings of any happiness which befalls them here, and remain so indifferent when we are told that "the word of the truth of the gospel" is come unto them? Surely we do not value as we ought that word ourselves, or we should rejoice to know that it is extended to our brethren. We should make it our earnest prayer in their behalf that it may bring forth fruit since the day when first they hear it, and know "the grace of God in truth." God knows it has not been thus fruitful in ourselves. God knows how many times, since first we knew his will in Christ concerning us, we have gone back from what we felt to be our duty. Thanks be to his name that yet He spares us, that yet He tries us. Let us now at length go on without halting in the way. Let us at length bear fruit unto perfection.

Here we may learn what it is to be fruitful. For that which St. Paul prayed for in behalf of the Colossians is what he would have us labour to attain: to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. For this we must read his word, wait on his ordinances, listen to his ministers, and watch to do all we know already. This is our road to "all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." This is the use of knowing God's will, to do it; to be "fruitful in every good work;"

not in some few that seem most easy to us, but in all, to do all things through Christ strengthening us, see Phil. 4. 13, with "patience and long suffering," so as not to be weary of well doing, and to work with joy, and with thankfulness to God for the holiness we now have, for the heaven we hope for. This is the way God makes us fit for heaven, by making us first holy upon earth. He delivers us from the power of darkness, when He translates us into the kingdom of his dear Son. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus we have been brought step by step to the foundation of all right faith, and of all holy living, the atonement of the death of Christ. Thus we are taught to refer to Him, and to his blood shed for us, all hope of our sins being forgiven, all hope of being delivered from sinning.

Let us observe, then, who it is that we are to trust in. It is One who is the image of the invisible God, it is One who was begotten before any creature was created. It is One who is God Himself. "He is the image of God, inasmuch as He took on Him our flesh, and therein made manifest to us what God is, namely, love. He is the first born of every creature, that is to say, begotten before every creature, inasmuch as by Him, and for Him, for his glory all created things were made. Thus "he is before all things, and by him all things consist." He precedes them in time, for He was before them in eternity. They consist in Him. For without Him they perish. Who then shall deprive us of our hope? What enemy shall pluck us out of our Redeemer's hand? He is all great, all good, all glorious. He gave Himself for us. He will give us all things needful for our salvation. He will save us. He has saved us. We have redemption in Him, through his blood. Let us act as if it were ours. Let us feel that it is ours. It is God who gives it us. It is the Father who gave his Son. It is the Son who gave Himself. Therefore to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all glory henceforth for ever.

St. Paul setteth forth his ministry.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that || in all things he might have the preeminence.

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

20 And, † having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies ‡ in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every

|| Or, among all.

† Or, making peace.

‡ Or, fully to preach the word of God. Rom. 15. 19.

creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for your body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, ¶ to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even, the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ ** in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

† Or, by your mind in wicked works.

** Or, among you.

§ 576. *What is behind of the afflictions of Christ.*

What an object was this for St. Paul to labour for, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus!" What an end for each Christian minister to aim at! How diligently ought all people to help in the good work, striving together with them, striving according to the working of Him who alone can give success unto their labours! One way only there is for us to follow, and this is the way in which St. Paul has gone before; and this is to preach Christ, to promote the preaching of Christ, the warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, the making known the riches of the glory of this mystery among all mankind. What pains are we now taking for this end? What help are we now giving? In what sense, to what degree, are we labouring, or assisting them that labour? Let us not rest till we find some way to help. Let us not be contented to know the truth ourselves, without striving to impart it as widely as we can unto our perishing fellow creatures. How few of all now living in the world can we expect to see presented in the end "perfect in Christ Jesus." How little do we know of what awaits the rest! How much have we to fear in their behalf! How much have we ourselves to answer for if we take little pains for their instruction!

Let us note then how St. Paul preached Christ. Our Redeemer, he tells us, "is the head of the body, the church." Thus it has seemed good unto the Father "that in him should all fulness dwell." The outward world is of his creation. The world within, the soul, is his also. He is as the head, and we the body. He rules. And we obey. And in the fulness of his power it pleased Him to humble Himself for our sakes, that "through the blood of his cross" He might make peace for us, and "reconcile all things unto himself." Such is the humiliation He submitted to in the world, for us men and for our salvation. And shall all this be done for nought? Shall all this be done, and we not be reconciled? Are we still alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works? Has the body of his flesh suffered death in vain? Shall He not have in the end to present us "holy and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight?" All depends upon our continuing "in the faith, grounded and settled;" upon our being not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which we have heard. Let us examine ourselves then, Are we in the faith? Have we been ever in it? Do we continue in it? What hope have we at this moment? Is it a hope full of immortality? Is it such a hope as would make us rejoice with St. Paul in any sufferings we may be called upon to endure?

He rejoiced in his sufferings, and considered that thereby he was filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ, that he was filling it up in his flesh, to the profit of the church. Is this the view we take of our sufferings? Is this the spirit in which we have hitherto received them? Is this the temper in which we are prepared to receive them for the future? It pleased God to make perfect the Captain of our salvation through sufferings. And as He is engaged in bringing many sons unto glory, it pleases Him that they also should suffer. This then is what is behind of the afflictions of Christ. This is what must be endured in addition to his sufferings. We also must suffer. And we also must glory in tribulations. We must really feel that it is good for us to be afflicted. And for this it will be helpful for us to think that we are filling up in our flesh that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Happy are they who thus suffer with Him; who shall be also glorified together! Happy they who so receive the chastisements which God inflicts, as that they may be counted to be filling up what is ordered by his will, in addition to the sufferings of Christ!

Blessed Lord, who sufferedst for us, the just for the unjust, grant that in our sufferings we may fulfil thy work, grant that we may suffer according to thy will!

St. Paul had great conflict for his converts.

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 † In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

|| Or, fear, or, care.

† Or, wherein.

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith; as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

† Or, elements.

§ 577. *That baptism is Christian circumcision.*

Hear ye that live at ease, ye who are careless about your own salvation, and much more about the salvation of your brethren; hear what great conflict St. Paul had, not only for his converts whom he knew, but for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh, and amongst them even for us also! Hear what it is that he longs for, and strives for, in our behalf; that our "hearts may be comforted," even by the Comforter Himself, that we may be "knit together in love," not separate as Christians now are into sects, but closely joined in one body; and that we may be rich in "the full assurance of understanding," so as both to know the whole amount of our privileges in the Gospel, and to believe that they are ours for ever; "to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God," that we may be free to confess God before men, to declare to others what we feel ourselves, that God is to us a Father, that Christ who died for us is his ever blessed Son, and that in Him, even in our Saviour Christ, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" What then need we to know more, than the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord? What need we to possess more, than the riches of his redeeming love?

St. Paul dwelt on these matters the more earnestly, for fear any one should beguile the Colossians with enticing words. For there were even then, as now, amongst believers many errors passing current for the truth. And they who held false doctrines were, as now, active and artful in enticing converts to join their ranks. Order, and stedfastness of faith in Christ, these were the two things which the apostle rejoiced to see in the Colossians, for their security against being led astray. Let us then be careful to observe order, and due subordination. Let us obey them who are in authority over us. Let us, like a well disciplined army, be subject one to another, and all together unto Him which is the head. And let us be stedfast in the faith. Let us be stedfast in our faith in Christ. Let us walk in Jesus Christ our Lord, even as we have received Him, as we have received the faith of Christ from our fathers, as the Colossians received it from St. Paul. This is our best way of safety; for this is our only way of stedfastness; to walk according to our faith, to live according to our profession. They who walk by faith, they who live in hope and joy, they who found the happiness of their whole lives on their Saviour's love, they who abound therein with thanksgiving, these will be the last to be corrupted by the vain deceits of man's invention, these will be the last to swerve from the true faith of Christ. In Him they find themselves complete, thoroughly assured of pardon, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. In Him they are therefore persuaded by their own experience, in "him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." Oh how can He be less than God, whom we find able to save us from our sins, of whom we believe that He reconciled us to the Father, and whom we daily experience to be able to move our inmost hearts!

And here, for our further confirmation, let us consider when it was that we first received Christ, even when we were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This then is the faith in which we must continue stedfast. For baptism is to us the "circumcision made without hands," it is "the circumcision of Christ," or Christian circumcision; it is to Christians what circumcision was to Jews, a pledge and token of the faith revealed to us by God, a pledge and token of our willingness to walk therein continually. Buried we were with Christ in baptism, buried to all other doctrines, buried to all other pursuits, buried to all other desires, except those to which we then were pledged. And as we were then buried with Him, so must we also count ourselves to have risen with Him, risen to a life like his, "through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Oh what avails all other faith, if we believe not in this our resurrection, if we hold not that like as Christ was raised from the dead, so ought we also to walk in newness of life? See Rom. 6. 4.

Ordinances that were against us blotted out.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

16 Let no man therefore judge you of meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intrud-

|| Or, in himself.

† Or, in eating and drinking.

¶ Or, being a voluntary in humility.

•• Or, elements.

‡ Or, in part.

§ Or, judge against you.

†† Or, punishing, or, not sparing.

ing, into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and †† neglecting of the body; but in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

§ 578. *How carefully we must hold the Head, even Christ.*

At our birth we were no better than dead in sins. At our baptism God quickened us, implanted in us the principle of a new life. He quickened us together with Christ. As He raised Christ from the dead, so He raised us up from our spiritual death, to spiritual life. This is our present condition. These privileges are now actually ours. But we must believe that they are so. We must reckon ourselves to be thus dead to sin. We must be thoroughly persuaded in our hearts that God has for Christ's sake forgiven us all trespasses; that He has blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us," that this is now taken out of the way, being made null and void by the cross of Christ. We must share in faith the spoils of our Redeemer's victory. We must join in his triumph over the principalities and powers of darkness. We must act, and speak, and think, at once with most deep humility in respect to our own powers, and with most entire confidence in respect to our success through the strength of our blessed Lord.

How different from this state of triumph is the ordinary frame of mind and behaviour, even of such as pass for devout believers in the Lord! How often are they dispirited by apprehended dangers! How often rejected by the defeat of their plans, or by the failure of their purposes! How often are they harassed by contentions about trifles; how often turned out of their heavenward course by anxiety about the vanities of earth! How often are they unhappy in their lives; how often at the same time afraid to die! Nor is it uncommon to find them troubled by the judgments of others about such things as meat or drink, holidays, or Sabbaths; or beguiled by the fair show of affected humility, in such practices as the worshipping of angels, as if men were not competent to apply to God in prayer, except through their means and intercession. Most vain pretence! Most gross misapprehension of our Christian privilege! Most mischievous invention of the carnal mind, which refuses the commandments of God, but delights to fulfil commandments of its own; which disobeyed the law of Moses as long as it was binding, and when it was annulled then desired to retain it; which would make a shew of wisdom in will worship, instead of being really wise, and really self denying; not having the body in any honour, but for the satisfaction of itself, of the flesh or carnal mind!

Be it our care to hold "the Head," to cleave to Christ as our Head; and to derive, as members of his body, our nourishment from our union with Him. Let us study to conform our will to his, to worship in the way that He would have us, and with real humility to trust that through his mediation we may approach unto the Father as adopted children, reconciled through the death of our Redeemer. Let us have no confidence in our own strength, no pleasure in our own wisdom, for the wisdom of men is foolishness with God, see 1 Cor. 1, 20, and when we are weak, then we are strong, when we are most thoroughly sensible of our own weakness, then we have most ground to hope for the strength of God. The Holy Spirit will then most surely dwell within our hearts. For we shall then most earnestly pray for this heavenly help. And with the help of the Holy Spirit we may most confidently hope that we shall increase "with the increase of God," grow in every thing that is good, even as God would have us. This is our Christian triumph; to overcome sin, the world, and the devil; to know that our own wisdom is folly, to feel that our own strength is weakness, to overcome our own passion, pride, and prejudices, in one word, to overcome ourselves. And this triumph is not ours, but the triumph of God. It is the Father who first quickens us, having forgiven us all trespasses. It is the Son who, by his cross, blots out our sins. It is the Holy Ghost who makes us holy. God gives us the victory. God give us the grace to give Him all the praise!

How to be risen with Christ.

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

|| Or, mind.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

† Or, complaint.

§ 579. *That we cannot at once wear two characters.*

Oh where are true Christians to be found if this be their correct description? Where are they who are risen with Christ, if they are to be known by seeking "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God?" They seek them, they set their affections on them, "not on things on the earth." Where are they whose heart's desire is not on earthly things? They are dead, or rather the life they have is hid with Christ in God. They are dead as far as the love of this world is concerned. They are dead to the things that are in the world. They are alive to God. They are alive to heaven. They are alive to heavenly things. They care not to make a fine appearance here in the esteem of men. They are bent upon appearing in glory with Christ, when He shall come at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead. And therefore they do these two things, they put off sin, they put on holiness. They put off the "garment spotted by the flesh." Jude 23. They put on the white linen of the Gospel, which is the righteousness of saints. See Rev. 19. 8.

See then how many things must be now put off by those who would hereafter appear with Christ in glory! Those sins of which it is a shame to speak, and that covetousness in which men are not ashamed to glory, the wrath which embitters us against each other, the blasphemy which is the height of daring against God, the corrupt conversation which propagates evil thoughts, and falsehood which violates the chief end and use of speech, which is communication of the truth. These are things for which the "wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." These are things in some of which it is to be feared that very many even of Christians have been used to walk. But how then can they have been risen with Christ? How grievously in them must the grace of God have been neglected! How grossly inconsistent is every one of these practices, in even the least degree, with that heavenly frame of mind, and heavenly kind of life, to which every Christian is pledged in baptism, in which it should be the chief object of education to train up every Christian child, and in which every Christian, when grown up, should labour daily to increase. Can these be they who have put off the old man with his deeds, these whose lips are so free to swear, so ready to deceive, these whose temper is so hasty, whose affections are so earnestly set on earthly riches, or on the pleasures of fleshly lusts? Is this the life that is hidden with Christ in God?

But say we have put off such gross sins, as are here mentioned, say we are not guilty of these manifest ill practices, we must further be careful to maintain good works, we must "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Nor shall we indeed ever thoroughly do the one without the other. The house that is swept and garnished will not be long empty. Either it must be filled with the Spirit, or Satan will soon again take possession. See Matt. 12. 44, 45. We cannot serve two masters. See Matt. 6. 24. Christ must be all, and in all, or He has no part in us, and we have no part or lot in Him. Let us then put on, as becomes the elect of God, let us put on the graces of the Gospel. Let us, in place of the rejected garments of iniquity, be clothed with the robes of righteousness. And especially, instead of pride, anger, and malice, let us be merciful, kind, humble, meek, long suffering, willing to bear with one another, apt to forgive, always bearing in mind this short and affecting rule, "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Christ forgave us. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven" us. Eph. 4. 32. And yet God will not forgive us our trespasses unless we forgive our brethren theirs. See Matt. 16. 15. Far be from us then all lurking bitterness against those who have affronted us! Far be from us all secret grudge against those who have done us wrong! Let us hope that they did not intend it. Let us forgive them even if they did. Let us be willing to believe that they did not. Let us pray as did our Lord for his enemies; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23. 34.

Charity. Family relationship.

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children to *anger*, lest they be discouraged.

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons.

§ 580. *The connection of our relative duties.*

Charity is to be put on above all the other graces of the Christian character, being as a girdle to bind the rest together. For charity is love. And it is therefore the bond of perfectness, because God Himself is love. See 1 John 4. 8. And with love there will come the peace of God, ruling in our hearts, peace amongst one another, as members of one body, peace within ourselves, as between ourselves and God. And with peace there will be also thankfulness. And with thankfulness a high esteem for the word of Christ, as a treasure of inestimable value; together with an earnest desire to make it profitable to our brethren. So that we shall be anxious to teach and admonish one another, to stir up one another, and ourselves also, by psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Thus whether we speak, or whether we sing, whether we act, or think, or feel, we shall "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Oh, happy state of mind, for a child of fallen Adam to attain! Oh, heaven upon earth, to have thankfulness instead of murmuring, peace instead of strife, love animating our hearts, and grace guiding the utterance of our lips! "Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God." Ps. 144. 15.

But the apostle is not content with general directions. He guards against the prevalent inclination of mankind, to say, Lord, Lord, whilst they do not their Father's will. And besides telling us to do all things in the name of Christ, he mentions several duties in particular, and gives exact instructions in every instance. Wives are here taught how to behave towards their husbands, namely to submit themselves, "as it is fit in the Lord," as is agreeable to the will of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Husbands by the same rule here learn to love their wives; and to be not bitter against them. For it is to bitterness that they are tempted, if their authority is set at naught, to a sullen temper, to cold and unkind treatment. But this is not the right way for them to rule. This is not the Christian way to establish their due authority. "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Ver. 13. Bear with the infirmities of the weak. Overcome in your wives evil with good. Rule, but let it be with affection. Allow not wrong; and yet revenge it not. Children have their rule of conduct expressed in one word, obedience. They are to obey their parents "in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Whilst parents, on the other hand, must lay no harsh commands upon their children, must not try their tempers, or wantonly thwart their inclinations. Servants too must in like manner obey their masters. And masters, are immediately afterwards directed to give to their servants that which is just and equal, to give them all their due, to treat them as far as possible as equals; considering themselves as fellow servants of a Master which is in heaven. Ch. 4. 1.

And in all this let us observe how suitably each duty is connected with its fellow, how each party has his own proper work made easy by the behaviour which is enjoined upon the other. How delightful to the wife is submission, when the husband is not bitter but affectionate! How pleasant for the husband to love, when the wife knows her own place and submits! In children, and in servants, how willing is obedience to a kind master, to a compassionate father! In a father or a master how much more ready is compassion towards obedient children, and kindness to attentive servants! Such is the harmony of Christian precepts. Such is the universal peace and joy which would flow from their general adoption. But where one party is froward, the other must still act "as it is fit in the Lord." And in any case it must be our heart's desire to please the Lord and not men, to consider ourselves as serving Christ, and to remember that we shall have to give account to Him. For then, whether those with whom we live agree to do his will or not, we "shall receive the reward of the inheritance." Whilst "he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done," we shall be replenished with peace even here, and be removed in due time from the contradiction of sinners upon earth, to the full communion of saints in heaven.

Concluding salutations.

1 Masters give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas (touching whom

ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the eireumeision. These only *are my* fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always *||* labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and *†* complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are* in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

16 And when this epistle is *†*read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

|| Or, striving.

† Or, filled.

§ 581. *Christian fellowship.*

“Continue in prayer.” This is a rule often repeated by St. Paul. It is a lesson of which we need to be oftentimes reminded. For are we not by nature most averse to pray? Do we not find ourselves continually tempted to neglect our prayers? Let us on the contrary take pleasure in praying. Let us “watch in the same with thanksgiving.” Let us be thankful that we are allowed thus to draw near to God. Let us be thankful that He so graciously draws near to us. Let ministers pray earnestly for the people committed to their charge. Let the people pray for ministers, that God would open unto them a door of utterance, that they may have opportunity to speak the mystery of Christ, and that they may be eager to seize the opportunity; that they may not shrink from bonds or persecution; and that they may make manifest the mystery as they ought to speak. A praying ministry, and a praying people; what a delightful condition for a Christian community! How different from what Satan tries to make us, the ministers and the people at variance with each other! What can be more grievous than such dissensions? What more hurtful to the prevalence of the Gospel? What more opposite to that wisdom in which we ought to walk towards them that are without? Oh let us in this respect, as well as in all others, redeem the time! Let us daily draw into more close communion with each other, ministers with the people, and the people with ministers. Let our communion be the interchange of prayers for each other, offices of mutual kindness, edifying conversation, and joint diligence in doing good unto all men. Thus having our speech always seasoned with grace, full of kindness towards each other and to all men, we shall be better able to convince the gainsayers, we shall have better reason to hope that we may convert the world.

Nothing is a greater hindrance to the success of those exertions, which Christians are now making for the diffusion of the truth, nothing is a greater hindrance than the coldness and distrust which prevails amongst the most eminent professors, the lack of free and kindly intercourse, of mutual prayers for each other and with each other. See how different was the state of things when St. Paul wrote to the Colossians. “See how kindly he speaks of Tychicus, “a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.” See how he desires to let them know all his state, not doubting that they were deeply interested, and how he wishes also through Tychicus to know theirs! How different is the comfort of the heart here so unaffectedly expressed, from the language of compliment and worldly civility, with which even ministers of the Gospel now suppose themselves constrained to address one another! Oh that all who hope so soon to dwell together in one heaven, would now aim at more cordial communion! Oh that all who expect

there to be received graciously by God, and admitted into one glorious inheritance, were now more free to receive each other !

Amongst these kindly salutations, we see an especial direction respecting "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas." And this was written, let us remember, after the contention about Mark, between Paul and Barnabas, when "they departed asunder one from the other : and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." Acts 15. 39. How delightful is this proof of renewed cordiality ! How profitable is this lesson unto us, that no private differences must be allowed to keep asunder the servants of the same Saviour Christ ! Again, it is mentioned both of Marcus and of Justus, that they were "of the circumcision." And we know how violent was the opposition which they of the circumcision had almost uniformly manifested towards St. Paul. We know that it was owing to their decrees that St. Paul was at Rome in bonds at the very time when this Epistle was written. Yet behold these two, though the only two Jewish converts who were his "fellow workers unto the kingdom of God," these two were of signal comfort to the apostle. So sweet ought it to be to us to meet with help and community of spirit amongst the members of an opposing party ! So ready ought we to be to acknowledge it ; so willing to return it ! Again, of Epaphras it is testified that he always laboured fervently in prayer for the Colossians. So urgently ought we to pray for each other, and for ourselves, that our prayers should deserve the name of labour, that we should be weary, not through disinclination to attend, but by reason of the earnestness of our attention !

"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans ; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Here is another counsel of Christian kindness, another instance of Christian communion. Even letters are not private, between them who have all things in common, between those who, whether they speak or write, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. What we write for good we shall be glad to have read by all whom it may concern. What we receive in writing that may profit others, we should be unwilling to confine exclusively to ourselves. The admonition to Archippus, and the salutation of Paul, and the exhortation to remember his bonds, though private, and particular, when first written to Colosse, become thus of universal interest to all churches of Christ for ever.

God grant that we may be anxious to communicate with each other, in all that can help forward our eternal welfare ! God grant that we may cordially cooperate with each other in all that best promotes the honour of our Lord !

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS, 1. 1—10.

St. Paul prays and gives thanks for the Thessalonians.

- 1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, *which is* in God the Father, and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;
- 3 Remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;
- 4 Knowing, brethren || beloved, your election of God.
- 5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.
- 6 And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:
- 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.
- 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.
- 9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
- 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

|| Or, *beloved of God, your election.*

§ 582. *Christian example. Waiting for Christ's coming.*

Thessalonica was one of the places in which St. Paul planted a Christian church, in which he was the first to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And after he had been driven from the city by the unbelieving Jews, he sent thither from Corinth this Epistle; in order to confirm his converts in their faith, and to urge them to a life suitable to their Christian calling. The apostle joins with himself Silvanus and Timotheus, elsewhere called the one Silas, the other Timothy. And this is his method in most of his Epistles. He strengthens his own sentence by the voice of others of God's servants. Apostle though he was, and well as he knew that God did indeed authorize what he wrote, he was glad to establish every word by the mouth of two or three witnesses. See 2 Cor. 13. 1. How much more ought those of us, who now bear rule in Christ's church, to take sweet counsel together for good; and especially in the exercise of authority, to be slow to act alone, glad to have the support and sanction of our brethren in the Lord! In his prayers, no less than in his instructions, St. Paul is joined by Silvanus and Timotheus. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Let us then join also in prayer for each other. And let these be the things we chiefly pray for. When we meet, or when we part, when we communicate by letters, by messengers, or by mutual friends, let us wish for each other not merely temporal prosperity, but that grace and peace which this world cannot give, but only "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Besides praying for the Thessalonians, St. Paul also gives thanks for their Christian proficiency. Very greatly he rejoiced to think of their faith, and hope, and love, to know of their "election of God." This is indeed the chief of blessings, to have been chosen, as all we have been, of God's free mercy, chosen to hear the tidings of salvation, chosen to know the love of Christ in dying for us, chosen to enjoy the ordinances of the Christian church, chosen to be Christians in profession, Christians in privileges, and Christians, unless it be our own fault, in the enjoyment of Christ for ever. This Gospel was preached to the Thessalonians, not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It had every confirmation from the miracles which were wrought, from the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost which were imparted. God grant that to us also it may come with force to convince, with the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to persuade, and with that lively assurance of its excellence, which arises from our own personal experience! God grant that we may taste and see how gracious the Lord is! God grant

that we may live up to the account here given of St. Paul's converts, that they became followers of him and of the Lord, "having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost!"

See how greatly the Thessalonians profited by the word! See how largely they helped others to profit! See how great is the gain, to have joy even in affliction, to have in "much affliction" "joy in the Holy Ghost!" See how powerful is the force of a good example, how widely it spreads, how long it endures! The Thessalonians were "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." And from them "sounded out the word of the Lord," not only in those two countries, "but also in every place" their "faith to Godward" was spread abroad. Converts in every place were continually proving the effect of St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica. He needed not to speak any thing; for they were forward to shew him what they had heard of his success with the Thessalonians, how they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Let us, who live in a world still teeming with idolaters, put in practice this method for their conversion, that we be ourselves thoroughly converted. Let us live a Christian life at home. Let it be heard of us, throughout all the world, that we are Christians in our own country, that amongst ourselves we obey the Gospel from the heart. Let our obedience be seen when we go abroad. Let the lives of Christians in foreign countries be such as shew to unbelievers the force of truth, the power of grace, the joy of holiness. Then should we scarce need "to speak any thing." Then would every Christian, whether seaman or merchant, or whatever were his employment, then would every Christian be a missionary.

Let us then wait for Christ from heaven. Let us live as they who watch for his coming. Let us consider that God raised his Son from the dead, "even Jesus;" and that this is He who delivereth us "from the wrath to come." Let us have a lively apprehension of the certainty that this wrath will come, that there is after death the judgment. See Heb. 9. 27. Let us have a thankful sense of the love of Christ in delivering us from the terrors of that dreadful day. And then how earnestly shall we long for his appearing, when we consider that it is for this end He comes; that as far as we are concerned it is to take us to Himself, delivered from sin, from death, from hell! And if thus we wait with longing and with love, if thus we look for his second coming with desire, how diligently shall we in the meantime obey his word, how heartily turn to God from this world's idols, to serve the living and true God!

Lord, hasten the day of thine appearing! Lord, enable us to help in turning many unto righteousness that they too may rejoice when Thou shalt appear!

How St. Paul had preached the Gospel to the Thessalonians.

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain :

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile :

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak ; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness ; God is witness :

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have || been burdensome as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children :

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail : for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe :

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

|| Or, *used authority.*

§ 583. *How we may best propagate the Gospel in the world.*

How freely does the apostle here write to the Thessalonians of his own labours and behaviour ! How plainly does he tell them of his own praiseworthy conduct ! And yet how utterly does he keep clear of all approach to vain glorying ! It was for their good that he thus wrote, and not for his own pleasure. It was painful to himself thus to speak his own praise ; but it was profitable for them. And therefore, in spite of all the pain, he did it. Oh that we may be thus willing, in all things, to do violence to our own feelings, for the sake of doing good unto our brethren ! Oh that we may be alike able with truth to say, that we would willingly impart to our brethren, “not the Gospel of God only,” but also, for the Gospel’s sake, even our own lives !

It was for this that St. Paul had exposed himself to suffer before. For this he was glad to have been shamefully entreated at Philippi. For this, after all this ill usage, he was bold, in the strength of God, to speak with much contention, with much eagerness and zeal, the truth as it is in Jesus. His zeal was without pretence. It came not of corrupt nature, or of guile. He felt himself “put in trust with the gospel.” He felt it a privilege to be thus entrusted. And in order to discharge his trust faithfully, he spake “not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.” This is an example of the deepest interest to those who have been devoted to the work of the ministry. But it will not be without its profit to any of us, if it help to kindle in us the like concern for the souls of our brethren, and an earnest desire to do all in our power, according to our respective stations in life, towards the edification of the world. Here we may learn never to use “flattering words,” by way of persuading men to their duty, but faithfully to speak the truth. Here we may learn never to make religion “a cloke of covetousness,” never to seek glory of men, never to press our own rights to the uttermost, but to be gentle in our behaviour, as a nurse towards children, affectionately desiring, for all whom we converse with, that we may recommend to them the truth which we profess.

St. Paul, in order to make his ministry more acceptable, laboured night and day for his own support, so as not to be chargeable to his converts. See Acts 20. 34. Might we not hence well learn, to labour with our hands, or to deny ourselves the enjoyment of that which we possess, in order to have the more to give towards the preaching of the Gospel ? St. Paul called men, and also God, to witness, how holily, and justly, and unblameably he had behaved among them that believed. Might we not hence be made aware, that the utmost circumspection on our part is needed, for us to give no offence to believers, as well as the utmost self denial, diligence, and bountifulness, that we may gain unbelievers to the truth. We must live “holily,” as in the presence of God, as under a constant sense of his presence. We must live “justly,” as owing much in many ways to our fellow creatures, and as being anxious to give to every one his due. We must live “unblameably,” as being subject to the observation of mankind, and as being watchful that our good should not be evil spoken of. See Rom. 14. 16. Thus we must make our light to shine before men, in order for them to glorify our Father which is in heaven. See Matt. 5. 16. And to the influence of our lives we must add exhortation with our lips. We must be ready, without forwardness, and yet without false shame, to exhort, and comfort, and charge every one, in some such terms as these : Brother, walk worthy of God ; consider how He “hath called you unto his kingdom and glory !” Think how great are your privileges ! Think how excellent is your inheritance ! Think how utterly unprofitable is your best of service ! Think how utterly unworthy of your calling is any service short of your very best !

St. Paul thanks God on behalf of the Thessalonians.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have *persecuted* us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

|| Or, *chased us out.*

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you; even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of *rejoicing*? *Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

† Or, *glorying.*

§ 584. *How we ought to wish to help in the conversion of the heathen.*

See for what St. Paul here thanked God, without ceasing, in behalf of the Thessalonians, that when they heard the Gospel, they “received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.” Let us therefore ourselves thus receive it. Let us look upon what we read in this volume with as much reverence as if we could hear God speaking it. Let us feel as well assured of his promises, let us stand as much in awe of his threatenings, as if again they were pronounced in our hearing by Himself, in the midst of thunderings and lightnings, from mount Sinai. And let us be also, as the Thessalonians were, followers of those churches of God, which have been noted for their purity and devotion. It is well to stand in the old ways. It is well to ask for the old paths. See Jer. 6. 16. It is well, because these probably are most nigh unto the pattern which was originally approved by God. For in the case of the Thessalonians, the apostle gave thanks, not merely for their being followers of the churches in Judæa, but because they were “followers of the churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus.” This is the only reason why the earliest churches, and the primitive Christians, were the best, and only thus far were they the best, as far as they were most “of God,” as far as they were most “in Christ Jesus.”

The primitive Christians suffered much by persecution. And in nothing were they more tried than this, that the Jews would have hindered them if they could from speaking “to the Gentiles that they might be saved.” And this, St. Paul says, was “to fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” So grievous is the offence of hindering the preaching of Christ’s Gospel! So great is the duty of promoting its influence in the world! So helpful towards being saved is hearing the Gospel! So great ought to be our grief if we hear it not ourselves, if we are hindered from helping to have it heard by others! Let us then study to help in this delightful work. Let us not rest without giving something towards the conversion of the heathen. Let us save, that we may have more to give for this object. Let us work, that we may have more to spare, more to save. Let us save, and spare, and give, out of a persuasion that it is no less than the eternal salvation of our brethren, which may be either hindered by our indifference, or promoted by our zeal.

See how St. Paul once and again desired to go to the Thessalonians! See how he considered it to be of Satan’s hindering that he was not able to fulfil his wishes! Will not this make us almost long ourselves to go out and visit those, whom we might help to edify in the truth! Though it be not in our power, it would be something if our hearts were thus inclined. It would be better, far better of the two, that we should wish, if we indulge in wishing at all, that we should wish to become missionaries, than that we should desire to see sights, in foreign lands. It would be better, far better, to travel for the conversion of the heathen, than for our own entertainment or instruction. Yet see what thousands crowd abroad in search of pleasure, for one who travels on purpose to do good! See what perils are encountered by sea and land, for the sake of adding to the stock of worldly knowledge, or increasing the store of worldly gain; whilst the slightest apprehended inconvenience deters men who are professed soldiers and servants of the Lord from attempting to preach the Gospel to the heathen! Oh that we, who in this country have such excellent advantages in the possession of the truth, may be more diligent and more adventurous in diffusing it abroad! Oh that we may feel the souls of our fellow creatures to be our hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing; yea, look upon the many sinners whom we help to convert from the error of their ways, as “our glory and joy,” “in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming!”

St. Paul testifieth his regard for the Thessalonians.

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us

always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 For now we ¹live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, ^{||} direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

¹ Rom. 7. 9.

^{||} Or, guide.

§ 585. *That we must increase in love daily.*

When St. Paul was in trouble he was anxious for his converts, lest the tempter should have tempted them, and his labour have been in their case vain. For they might easily have been led to reflect: can this be really the Gospel of God, seeing that its preachers suffer so much from the hand of man? Would He, who rules in heaven and in earth, allow his own ministers and messengers to fare the worst of all men? But God's ways are not our ways. His wisdom is far above out of our reach. And the end has shewn that the strength of his church consisted in the sufferings of his prophets and apostles, and of those whom they were the means of converting. For by these sufferings it is made manifest, that they who suffered must needs have been in earnest. We are sure that they would not have knowingly laid down their lives for a cunningly devised fable. And the more weak and lowly were the messengers of truth; we see in their success the more ample proof that it was the truth, and that God was with them.

The risk to which his converts were exposed was a great source of anxiety to St. Paul in his tribulation. In like manner he derived no little of his comfort from their stability, and faith, and perseverance. "We are comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith." And again, "we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." Happy are they whose happiness arises from the faith and steadfastness of them they love! Happy are they who rejoice in the spiritual prosperity of their friends, and live in their spiritual life! Let us try to regulate our views of happiness by this standard. Let us accustom ourselves to speak of joy and sorrow, as if heaven were really infinitely better than earth, and the soul infinitely more precious than all things else. Then should we think it no strange matter to speak to one another of our spiritual privileges, or to express the pleasure we derive in each other's spiritual proficiency. Then should we render thanks to God for all the joy we have, if our joy were such as comes from Him alone, and if we felt it to be indeed his gift. Then should we also, like St. Paul, pray exceedingly, even "night and day," that we may have both the will and opportunity to perfect that which is lacking in the faith of our brethren.

And what we pray for, let us at the same time strive to compass, that all whom we can influence may abound in love one towards another, and that we may abound in love to them, to the end that Christ may stablish both our hearts and theirs "unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints." The end is our being approved when our Lord shall come. Love is our means thereto. Let us see then, let us examine, let us search honestly into our own hearts, is our love on the increase? do we abound more and more? What signs do we find within ourselves, what tokens in our conduct, of the increase of our love? Are we more free to give? Are we more apt to pardon? Are we more lowly in our estimate of ourselves? Are we more diligent in doing good? Are we more thankful unto God for his goodness? Are we more earnestly desirous to shew forth his praise, not only with our lips but in our lives? In these things, and such as these, do we really grow? Are we more advanced this year than a year ago, this day than yesterday? Each day, let us remember, brings us nearer and nearer to our end, the coming of the Lord draws more and more nigh. He comes "with all his saints." What ground have we to hope that we shall belong unto that holy company? He comes to make eternal separation between the wheat and the tares, the holy and the wicked. What reason have we for trusting that we shall be then found "unblameable in holiness before God?"

Exhortations to advancement in purity and love.

1 Furthermore then we || beseech you, brethren, and * exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

6 That no man go beyond and † defraud his brother ‡ in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

|| Or, request.

* Or, beseech.

§ Or, rejecteth.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that § despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack ¶ of nothing.

† Or, oppress, or, overreach.

¶ Or, of no man.

‡ Or, in the matter.

§ 586. *Why we must be quiet and mind our own business.*

The apostle here immediately repeats the important lesson of Christian progress. We, who have received how we ought to walk and to please God, must daily endeavour to "abound more and more." For these are among the chief things we are to learn and know, that hitherto we know not as we ought to know, do not as we ought to do, love not as we ought to love, obey not as we ought to obey. We must be always improving in all things; not wavering in our course, but going on towards perfection, not swerving from one and the same direction, but advancing in it faster and faster. We must note from time to time in what we are most tempted still to err, and in this we must labour to amend. We must examine in what duty we are most deficient, and in this we must take pains to make advancement. We must consider also in what grace we have hitherto most prospered, and in this we must take very great pains indeed, that we continue to abound more and more.

This rule of continual improvement is here applied by St. Paul to the duties of chastity. And to these duties he particularly referred, because they were most notoriously neglected amongst the heathens. That which amongst them was the most rare of virtues, is the plain duty of every one of us Christians. Instead of fornication every Christian must know how to keep his body "in sanctification and honour." A hard lesson this to our corrupted nature. But it must be learnt; for "it is the will of God," even our sanctification. And in this thing, each must especially beware that he wrong not nor defraud his brother. For "the Lord is the avenger of all such" as are wronged or defrauded. He will bring to punishment the adulterer, and adulteress. "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness." And whosoever makes light of this his call, of these his commandments, despises "not man, but God;" not only wrongs his brother, but offends his Maker, "who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." And what an aggravation of all our sins is this! We grieve the Holy Ghost. We sin against the inward light of grace. We sin against the godly motions of Him who strives to make us holy. We sin unthankfully; in despite of God's good gift. We sin presumptuously; in defiance of God's ever present power.

But the sins here particularly spoken of are not only against God, but also against man, are inconsistent not only with the love of God but also with the love of man. And therefore the apostle takes care to add this affecting exhortation to brotherly love: "as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." This is the way in which he would work upon our affections. This is the way in which he would turn them towards God. This is the way in which he would induce us, in this as in all other things, to "increase more and more." He needs not to write, and yet he writes. He writes, but it is to say he needs not. He commends without flattery where honestly he can, that he may move us to desire the greater praise. And in the very terms of his commendation he reminds us, that it is of God that we are taught, that we owe our knowledge and our practice both to Him; and that from Him we must seek for help in our further advancement. And to this he adds directions that we study to be quiet, and to do our own business, and to work with our own hands. And by this means he instructs us that two objects will be promoted, the one, that we "walk honestly toward them that are without," the other, that we "have lack of nothing." Let this then be our way to plenty and to peace, not inordinate and meddling activity, but diligence in our proper work, and contentment in our proper station. And let this be the line of conduct which we endeavour to maintain, more especially with a view to our influence on the world. For there is nothing which the worldly minded more quickly discern to be inconsistent with our Christian profession, than over anxious thought for the morrow, or overweening confidence in ourselves. Nor is there any thing more likely to conciliate their regard towards the truth, in the conduct of those who hold it, than if they see us at once diligent and contented, at once anxious to work for God, and yet resigned when we are hindered by the dispensations of his will.

St. Paul would not have us ignorant concerning the deceased.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore || comfort one another with these words.

|| Or, *exhort.*

§ 587. *The resurrection of the dead at the coming of Christ.*

The death of those whom we love on earth, whom we love with undissembled affection, is to the natural man the most severe and hopeless of afflictions. The Christian too on such occasions is sorrowful. But in no case is it more true than in this, that he is "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." 2 Cor. 6. 10. He sorrows not "as others which have no hope." He has hope. He has ground for hoping. He hopes. His hope is founded on his faith. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again," we doubt not that in like manner God will bring to a new and glorious life "them also which sleep in Jesus," all who having lived unto the Lord, die in the Lord. This is one chief article of our belief, the resurrection of the saints unto everlasting happiness. And therefore we are enabled to give thanks to God, in behalf of our departed brethren, that it has pleased God to take them out of the miseries of this sinful world. For how much better must it be, to be where they are who sleep in Jesus, than here in the midst of many who scorn his name! How much better to be where they weep no more, neither is there any more death, see Rev. 21. 4, than in a world where sorrow and mortality embitter the most excellent of earthly pleasures! Oh that our affection may be weaned from earth and set on things above! Oh that we may contemplate with joy, both for our friends and for ourselves, the resurrection of the dead unto life eternal!

We are here graciously informed of some particulars of that which will take place when the dead arise. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." A powerful impression will be made upon our senses by some sound unheard-of before, as of the shout of a conquering army, "with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." And then, as St. Paul has elsewhere described it, "every man in his own order" 1 Cor. 15. 23. will arise. First, they who have died in the faith and love of Christ, will rise again with their bodies. And then all those saints who shall be alive upon the earth at the time of our Lord's appearing, will be caught up together with the others, "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." And both together will "ever be with the Lord." This is eternal life indeed, to be with Christ, to be with Christ for ever. This is that end of our believing, the salvation of our souls, which makes all we suffer here to be as dust in the balance. What matters it with whom we may be here bound to associate? Soon it will come to pass that we shall "ever be with the Lord." What matters it though they of our own household prove our foes? Soon, we trust, we shall be with Christ, where He is. See John 14. 3.

St. Paul here as elsewhere speaks of himself, and of other Christians then alive, as though they might possibly be alive at the coming of Christ. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man." Matt. 24. 36. And therefore all men at all times ought to be looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God; see 2 Pet. 3. 12; all men at all times ought to speak and think of themselves as having a common interest in an event, which must happen in some generation, and may for aught they know happen in theirs. Nay, so eager ought to be our anxiety for that day, so lively our hope of its coming whilst we live, so high our esteem of its joyfulness, that it seems as if our sorrow in the death of Christian friends might be apt to arise from an apprehension, lest they should miss any of the joy of receiving our Lord. And it is to meet an apprehension such as this, that the apostle here declares, that those of us who at that day shall be living, will not prevent, will have no preference over, them which are asleep. On the contrary, the dead in Christ will rise first, ere ever the living are caught up in the clouds; and these having arisen, both will be caught up together. Oh heavenly comfort, provided against heavenly minded grief! How does it put to shame our carnal sorrowing for friends departed! How much better might we do, to be concerned lest they should lose any of the joy of their Lord's appearing, than to regret that they have been taken away from any of the pleasures they were enjoying upon the earth! How much better, than to wish our time prolonged in this world, how much better should we do, to pray to God that it may please Him shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom! (Burial Service).

St. Paul exhorteth to watchfulness.

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore, let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they

that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore || comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

|| Or, exhort.

§ 588. *Thankfulness for the help of ministers.*

The coming of the Lord is the chief topic of comfort set forth in the preceding chapter, to those who mourn for departed friends. But as to when the Lord shall come, of this there was no need for St. Paul to write. For the Thessalonians were already well aware "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." So at least it will be to them who look not for his coming. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Oh how fearful then is the case of those, who live at ease, but without God in the world! Oh how near is death unto the most healthful! How close at hand to the most careless is the day of judgment! Never may we forget the need we have to watch! Never may we say unto ourselves or to our brethren, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Jer. 8. 11. Never may we neglect our opportunity to escape, or wrest to our destruction our means of escaping!

That day will not thus surprise the children of light. That day will not overtake them as a thief. They who daily look for it will rather think it long in coming, than marvel that it comes so soon. How long, they will be apt to say, how long, O blessed Lord, how long shall we yet suffer upon the earth? how long shalt Thou be so dishonoured? Soon may we be with Thee where Thou art! "Thy kingdom come!" Matt. 6. 10. And come Thou with it! Even so, come quickly! See Rev. 22. 20. Let us cease to be exposed to risk of sinning! Let us begin to sing songs of praise in the land of our inheritance! What unseen glories will there greet our eyes. Oh how we long to see them! What sounds of sweetest melody will there enchant our ears. Oh how we long to hear them! Oh make us to long more! Quicken in us all good desires! Enliven in us all heavenly thoughts! Strengthen in us all holy purposes! Make us more and more meet to be inheritors with the saints in light! Then will that day never come upon us unawares if we look for it each hour of our lives. Nor can it ever be unwelcome when it comes, if we are continually longing for its arrival.

"Therefore, let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober." Sleep here signifies spiritual sloth. And night is also spiritual darkness. "For they that sleep sleep in the night." It is night with us as long as we are spiritually asleep. And the spiritual and the natural night are alike in this, that each of them is the season for drunkenness, and for all manner of iniquity. Let us therefore be "of the day." Let us consider ourselves to be walking in the light of God's countenance. Let us reckon that He sees all we do. Let us delight to do that which He delights to see. Whether it be night or day let us be always on our guard, watching against sin, having clothed ourselves, by means of prayer, in the armour of God! "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." Most merciful appointment this of God! Most marvellous life this which God preserves within us! Even whilst we sleep, we are still alive. Even whilst we from time to time are overtaken by spiritual slothfulness, God enables us to awake, and to arise from the dead.

With thoughts like these let us comfort ourselves together, and edify one another. And let us be thankful for the provision which God has made towards the edifying of his church, by the appointment of ministers to labour among the rest, to be over them in the Lord, and to admonish them. Let us esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, not for themselves, their own gifts and graces, but for the holy work in which they are engaged, the commission they bear, the Lord whom they serve, and whose they are. This is the way to be at peace among ourselves when we are submissive to those who are set over us. This is the way to be at peace with God, when we receive with respect and lively faith the testimony which his messengers have to give us, concerning his Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

That St. Paul's doctrine is practical.

14 Now we ¶ exhort you, brethren, warn them that are † unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

¶ Or, beseech.

† Or, disorderly.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

27 ‡ I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *be* with you. Amen.

‡ Or, adjure.

§ 589. *How we ought to be blameless in all things.*

How plainly does St. Paul shew us, at this conclusion of his Epistle, that the doctrine he has been teaching us is practical; that to do these things is quite as needful as to know and to believe them! How many and how eminent are the duties of holiness, which in these few verses he urges on our attention! "Warn them that are unruly." Let us never fail to tell such how great their danger is. Let us never fail to tell our brethren who offend against the settled rule and order of the church, that to despise those whom He appoints for his ministers, is little else than to despise Himself. See Luke 10. 16. "Comfort the feebleminded." Let us never fail to afford to such the help of Christian consolation. "Support the weak." Let us rejoice to help the helpless. Let us pray for those who pray not for themselves. "Be patient towards all men." Let us bear with the perversity of the most perverse. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man." Nay, let us rather do good to them who do ill to us; thus following after that which is good, not only amongst ourselves, but also to all men.

"Rejoice evermore;" even in all things that befall us. For we have always much to make us glad. "Pray without ceasing;" losing no opportunity of devotion, and being always in a devout frame of mind. For we have always much to ask for. "In every thing give thanks." For, behold, we owe all to God. And this is his will in all things, that we should find it pleasant to be thankful. "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning" us. For in his Son He has made it manifest how much He loves us. And to be thankful, what is this but to "love him because he first loved us?" 1 John 4. 19. "Quench not the Spirit." This would be to put out the light that is in us, the only light. And if thus we love darkness rather than light, how great is our darkness? "Despise not prophesyings;" or any spiritual gifts. This would be to make light of God's chiefest blessings. And if thus we profit not by what He bestows; how surely will He take from us even that we have. The scorner, if he make not haste and repent, must expect to be given up to a reprobate mind.

"Prove all things." This is the way to choose aright. "Hold fast that which is good." This is the way to profit by our choice. Oh let not us be tossed about by every wind of doctrine! Oh let not us be positive in any doctrine at all, till we have proved it to be indeed the truth of God! "Abstain from all appearance of evil;" from evil of every kind, whatever form or figure it put on, however tempting to the sense, however plausible to the judgment. Nay, though it be but the appearance only, still "let not your good be evil spoken of." Rom. 14. 16. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." For in all these things, it is his strength which must be made perfect in our weakness. It is only through God's assistance that our "whole spirit and soul and body" can "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And what an end and object is this to set before us! What a height of holiness! What perfection of obedience! Our "whole spirit and soul and body!" What more could the apostle add? In what language could he more forcibly express his desire, that we should be altogether blameless. Oh how far have we been hitherto from this heavenly character! How little are we now like unto it! How little are we able, how little are we likely, to attain to it! And yet it is not so much our want of ability that keeps us back, as our conceiving ourselves to be more able than we are, and therefore not looking for the help which would enable us. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." It must be God's doing. Let us ask and He will give. Let us believe that He will do it; for He will. "Brethren, pray for us." Let us believe, let us ask, not only for ourselves but also for each other. "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss." Let us pray for each other out of pure affection. "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." Let us be free to communicate to each other all that most helps to edify ourselves.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," his free gift of holiness and of heaven, be with us all. Amen.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS, 1. 1—12.

St. Paul speaketh of the righteous judgment of God.

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when

the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with † his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire || taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would *count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

† Gr. the angels of his power.

|| Or, yielding.

* Or, vouchsafe.

§ 590. *Christ glorified in his saints, and they in Him.*

This second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written soon after the first, probably as soon as St. Paul had heard of the effect which the first produced. And in this, as in the former one, the apostle joins Silvanus and Timotheus with himself, both in the prayers which he puts up for his converts, and in the counsel which he sends them for their good. He prays that they may have grace and peace, "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." He tells them how he feels himself bound always to thank God by reason of their faith and charity; and especially for the proof they gave of their patience and faith, manifested by their endurance of persecutions and tribulations. They then it seems were not only willing to bear afflictions, but in the midst of their afflictions they were full of love one to another; their temper not soured, their affections not chilled, but rather warmed towards each other with fresh fervour of love, the more they had to endure from the malice of their enemies. Let us when we encounter trouble, not only call to mind that "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth;" Heb. 12. 6; but also out of our sense of God's love, be so much the more inclined to behave with love towards each other.

These tribulations thus endured St. Paul considers to be a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; a proof that God will hereafter "judge the world in righteousness." Acts 17. 31. For it is evidently no more than justice, that God should in the end reward every man according as his work shall be. And therefore when we see on earth the wicked prosper, or the devout suffering adversity, we may be assured that there is a judgment yet to come, when God will recompense tribulation to them that trouble his servants, and minister peace to the troubled. Then shall the Lord Jesus "be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God," on such as might have known Him but would not; "and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," who knew these things but would not do them. These "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." They will be shut out from heaven for ever. Nay more, they will be sentenced to that endless misery which is here called "everlasting destruction;" to be always dying, never dead; to be always in flames, and yet not consumed; to be always in fire which cannot be quenched, gnawed on by a worm that "dieth not." Mark 9. 44.

But in that same day, our blessed Lord shall be "glorified in his saints." He will "be admired in all them that believe;" and amongst others, in many of the Thessalonians; because the testimony of the apostle among them had been believed. See then how great a thing it is to believe! See how this is of the first importance to believe the word of God, to receive the witness of God's ministers. Let us but believe in earnest, and we shall both love and obey. Let us believe, obey, and love, and we shall be among those in whom our Lord is glorified, and we in Him. And for this end let us pray diligently, that God would count us worthy of his heavenly calling, that He would fulfil in us "all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." And then what an honour, what a privilege is this for sinners, that Christ should be glorified in them; here in their patient endurance of tribulation, hereafter in their partaking of everlasting joy! Yes, what a joy, what a glory is this to be offered to the most sinful of mankind, that they through repentance and faith, through God's calling, and by his good pleasure, and by his fulfilling in them the work of faith with power, they, instead of "destruction from the presence of the Lord," even they may be glorified in Christ!

Of the man of sin.

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know what || withholdeth that he

might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

|| Or, *holdeth*.

§ 591. *The deceivableness of unrighteousness.*

The Thessalonians, it appears, had mistaken what St. Paul wrote in his first Epistle about the coming of the Lord. Or they had been shaken in mind and troubled by some words or letter purporting to be his, but not his in reality, and professing to give them certain information of the near coming of Christ to judgment. But the day of Christ is not exactly known to any man. And though it is good for us to be under a constant expectation that it may probably soon come, it is not well for us to be under a false impression, as if we knew just how soon this would be. And therefore St. Paul has here instructed us, by the word of revelation, that before that day of Christ there will be "a falling away first." And besides this also, before that day, there will be revealed "that man of sin," "the son of perdition." Of these things the apostle had before spoken to the Thessalonians, when he was yet with them. And here he describes for the information of all Christians, he describes the man of sin, as one "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

What a falling away is this! What an awful state of unbelief and blasphemy! How hardened in sin must that man be whose character is here set forth! How may we know what particular iniquity is here intended? How may we be secure from falling into the offences here denounced? Let us consider whether there have been any falling away amongst Christians which at all answers to the account here given. Let us examine, and learn whether any among Christians have ever opposed themselves in rivalry against God, yea exalted themselves above God, yea have seated themselves in the temple of God, shewing themselves as though they were in God's place. In St. Paul's time there was something which hindered the manifestation of these horrors; though even then this marvellous iniquity had begun to work. Even then there had crept into the Christian church some leaven of that unchristian spirit, which would sanctify the pride and passions of man, under the pretence of religion, and the assumed authority of God. Is that which then prevented its full development now removed? Has "that wicked one" been now revealed? Has his coming been signalized, "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," with false miracles and pretended prophecies, "and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish?" And is the day now nigh at hand when the Lord shall "consume" him "with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy" him "with the brightness of his coming?" Lord, Thou only knowest! Lord, we pray Thee, save our brethren from this gross delusion! Lord, let not us, we pray Thee, believe this lie!

Thus much is most clear, in this prophecy so hard to be understood, thus much is clear, that God sends this strong delusion, for the condemnation of those who love the darkness rather than the light. It is for this cause He sends it, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." And He sends it to those "who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." See then the "deceivableness of unrighteousness." See the credulity of unbelief! See how greedily the same men, who will not believe the truth, yet swallow down a lie! And why? Because the lie is their own; and they love it. The truth they hate; for it is not their own, but God's. It is "with the heart" that "man believeth." Rom. 10. 10. It is by love that faith is nourished. And it is for want of love towards God that men will not receive the truth, though they so readily give ear to falsehood.

Lord, help us to love Thee; that we may more heartily believe! Lord, help us to believe, that we may love Thee more!

St. Paul gives thanks and prays for the Thessalonians.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the

traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

§ 592. *The end and means of God's election.*

On contemplating the delusion which awaits many in the last days, St. Paul felt himself bound to give thanks alway to God, for those to whom he wrote, because God had from the beginning chosen them "to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," whereunto God had called them by the Gospel, "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." These expressions shew us the way of God's election; the end to which He calls us, and the means which He uses thereunto. The end to which He calls us is "salvation." It is to be saved, both soul and body, from that wrath to come, which is revealed against all unrighteousness of men. It is the "obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," even the sharing with Him in his heavenly inheritance. It is not only to be redeemed from endless misery, but to be happy in heaven for ever. Nay, it is to have peace and joy in believing, whilst on earth; as well as glory in the presence of God when we enter into eternity.

This is the end of our calling. And the means are these, "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." These are the means ordained by God. We must be made holy by the Holy Ghost, or we are not "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1. 12. We must be made holy. And it is the Holy Ghost which must make us holy. He can. And only He is able. For our parts we must believe the truth. We must believe the Gospel. For the Gospel is the truth. We must believe; and we must be steadfast in our faith. We must stand fast and hold that which we have been taught, whether by the written word of Scripture, or by our living teachers in the church, whose teaching and preaching, according to God's word, is ordained by God for the instruction of his people. Let not us neglect our part. Let not us suppose that we have the benefit of the covenant when we take no pleasure in the work. God has done his part in calling us. God will do his part in saving us. The Spirit will sanctify us, is sanctifying us, is striving to make us holy, moving us to be made holy. Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God even our Father, "hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace," and is ready also to comfort our hearts and to stablish us in every good word and work.

We cannot doubt that God will fulfil his promises. We do not really call in question the truth of his word. But do we act as if it were really true? Do we stand fast in that which we have heard? Do we live the life of faith? Do we consider ourselves chosen of God unto salvation? Do we cherish the godly motions of the Spirit in our hearts? Are we glad to feel Him moving us? Do we reckon our bodies to be his temple? Do we keep them holy as if they were? If not, how dare we to expect that we shall in the end be saved? If not, how dare we to live on, being as we are in daily danger of death, how dare we to be at ease, with the wrath to come so fiercely raging, so near approaching, and we having no security provided to assure us of help and deliverance? Most lamentable of all foolishness is this, to trust that God's mercy will be our safeguard then, if it be not now effectual to our amendment of life. And little less than madness is the thought, that because Christ died to save sinners, therefore we may sin more safely. And worse than folly, worse than madness is this most fatal fallacy, that because God has chosen us to salvation, therefore we shall in any case be saved. See, whether it be not thus that He has chosen us, "through sanctification of the Spirit." And yet we are not holy. See whether it be not also through "belief of the truth." And yet many will not believe. Nay, in this very Epistle, soon afterwards, St. Paul speaks of some among the brethren, who walked disorderly. Ch. 3. 6, 11. So that God's choice may be dishonoured by man's perversity. And besides his choosing us, we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. See 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Oh let us then exert all the strength that is within us, out of regard to the call of God who strengtheneth us. Let us at once work with all our might, and put all our trust in God. His promises were never meant to lead us to presumption. They are ample to inspire us with hope and confidence, with faith and courage, and love.

St. Paul's own example, and his salutation.

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord \parallel may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:

2 And that we may be delivered from \dagger unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into \ddagger the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you:

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, \S be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word \parallel by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

\parallel Gr. *may run*.

\dagger Gr. *absurd*.

\ddagger Or, *the patience of Christ*.

\S Or, *faint not*.

\parallel Or, *signify that man by an epistle*.

§ 593. *How to behave towards them who walk disorderly.*

St. Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for him. The most advanced in piety are at the same time the most sincerely desirous to profit by the prayers of their brethren. Let us then pray for all men. And especially for ministers of the Gospel, let us pray that through their means "the word of the Lord may have free course" and may "be glorified." Many are their difficulties; and in some cases great their persecutions. "For all men have not faith." And the faithless have not charity. And the uncharitable are at enmity with the messengers of peace. "But the Lord is faithful." This no doubt is their comfort in their tribulation. This should be our encouragement to persevere in prayer. "The Lord is faithful." He has promised. He will perform. He knows how to deliver his servants out of their afflictions, and how to stablish and keep those who pray for them. Happy are the people who thus pray for their ministers. Happy are the ministers who have this confidence in their people, that they both do, and will do, the things which they enjoin. Oh may the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, that thus we may feel a true Christian love, whether ministers or people, towards each other! Oh may the Lord direct our hearts unto the "patient waiting for Christ," that we may, as He did, suffer gladly, if it be God's will, and persevere stedfastly both in prayer and in well-doing, as long as it is God's pleasure!

St. Paul here reveals God's will in the difficult matter of our behaviour towards such Christian brethren as walk disorderly, not after the Christian rule of faith or conduct. He refers especially to some of the Christian converts who desired to eat their bread in idleness on the strength of their connexion with the Christian church. As if the Gospel, which bids the rich to relieve the wants of the poor, would allow the idle to prey upon the resources of the diligent. As if the ample provision herein made for the sick, the aged, the infirm, were designed to maintain in sloth and plenty the young, the healthy, and the strong. How different was the example which St. Paul himself had set; when he "wrought with labour and travail, night and day," on purpose that he might not be chargeable to any, not because he had not power, but to make himself an example for us to follow! How well did he by this example enforce his command, "that if any would not work, neither should he eat!" How earnestly did he exhort those who acted otherwise, that they would work with quietness, "and eat their own bread!" And how plainly does he shew us that this is one of the most important duties of a Christian, when he considers the neglect of it to be a reason why we should withdraw ourselves from the communion of the offenders! Never then may we thus presume upon our spiritual privileges to neglect our duties in the world! Never may we give this handle to the scorner to blaspheme, as if Christians, under the plea of heavenly mindedness, might be slothful and selfish, in this present world!

And now let us observe how we are to behave towards those who in this or any other way walk disorderly, and set at nought the rule of Christian faith or practice. "If any man obey not our word by this

epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." We are to withdraw ourselves from him. We are to try, by our estrangement, to bring him to a sense of sinfulness in the sight of God. "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Matt. 18. 15. Most needful warning, too often most grievously overlooked! So often in the community of Christ's professed disciples, have differences of opinion and departures from the faith been the signal for most bitter enmity! So often has the sword of persecution been applied instead of the word of brotherly admonition! We are reluctant to admonish our erring fellow Christians, we are reluctant to admonish them as brethren. This is to do violence to our own ease; and we profess that we are averse to give them pain. And yet they who are too tender to admonish, are found willing and eager to reproach and censure, to imprison, or even to put to death. So cruel are the tender mercies of the wicked. See Prov. 12. 10. So near akin is activity in wrong, to indolence in doing that which is right! Let us rouse ourselves to the duty of admonishing each other, and we shall be less likely to have need for separation and estrangement. And if there be any from whom we needs must be estranged, let us be on our guard against giving way to the feelings of hostility. In all our differences, in all our separations, may the Lord of peace give us "peace always by all means!" As far as possible may we be all of one mind, all of one community! And as far as this is still found to be not practicable, may we still be of one heart and spirit; may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ still be with us all! Amen.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO TIMOTHY, 1. 1—11.

St. Paul bids Timothy abide in Ephesus, and why.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is our hope;*

2 Unto Timothy, *my own son in the faith:* Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do.*

5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

6 From which some || having swerved have turned

aside unto vain jangling;

7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

8 But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully;

9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

|| Or, *not aiming at.*

§ 594. *Against vain disputation on religious topics.*

The Epistles to Timothy and to Titus are especially of interest to ministers of the Gospel, having been written to instruct these two faithful bishops in the duties of their sacred office. But that which greatly concerns ministers must needs also very greatly concern the people committed to their charge. For the ministry of the one is ordained for the edifying of the other. And whilst pastors are here taught how weighty is their charge, how far beyond all strength of man; the flock may learn at once neither to expect too much of their frail fellow creatures, nor yet to be well satisfied with too little. And besides this, all Christians, in proportion as they advance in Christian proficiency, are bound to become helpers of their brethren, and to assist ministers in their work, by helping to convert sinners from the error of their ways. So that all Christians ought to resort to these Epistles, for their own guidance in the work of edifying their brethren. And there is yet one more appropriate use which we may all find in what was written to Timothy and Titus. And this is, that as we here see what ministers ought to be, we learn also what the rest ought to pray for in their behalf. "Finally, brethren, pray for us." 2 Thes. 3. 1. These were among the last exhortations which St. Paul and Timothy together addressed to the Thessalonians. And now when the one writes to the other, we learn what we might have prayed for in behalf of either, we learn what we ought now actually to pray for in behalf of those who minister amongst ourselves. Let us therefore as we read, continually lift up our hearts in prayer to God, that it may please Him to bless those who are set over us in the Lord, even that they may have "grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

St. Paul directs Timothy to abide still at Ephesus. And this direction he gives in the form of a request: "As I besought thee." It is well then to have subordination among ministers. It is well that some should give directions, and others obey them. It is well that they who obey should obey willingly, and that they who order should give their directions courteously. St. Paul's directions were not without their reason. He assigned the reason when he gave them. He would have Timothy abide at Ephesus, in order to charge some not to teach false doctrine, and not to give heed to such subjects as tended to disputation, rather than to that "godly edifying which is in faith." Here is a warning of great use and necessity to such as desire by their religious conversation to minister grace unto the hearers. If this be among the wishes of our hearts, let us take heed and avoid curious speculations on questions which tend to exercise ingenuity in argument, rather than to promote improvement in practice. "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." This is the apostle's remark to those who raised their curious disputes on questions of the Jewish law. And this remark may well serve for us, under the Gospel, to guide us aright as to the objects we ought constantly to aim at, constantly desire to advance. "Charity;" not the display of our own power in argument, but the quickening of our own affections, and the affections of those whom we converse with, both towards man and towards God. "A pure heart;" not a heart puffed up with a conceit of wisdom, and therefore the more likely to fall into sensual folly, but a heart set in earnest upon God, desiring to see Him, whose presence the pure in heart, and they only, can enjoy. "A good conscience," enlightened by the experience of Christian friends, and confirmed in goodness by the force of their example. "Faith unfeigned," rooted and grounded in love, and also working by love,

so as to bring forth the fruits of holiness and joy. Oh that in our conversation we may aim at forwarding such ends as these! Oh that these precious fruits may abundantly testify to the faithfulness and devotion of our ministers!

One of the chief subjects of unprofitable disputation and "vain jangling," which used to beset Christians in the time of St. Paul, was the Law revealed to the Jews by Moses. Here we see how this very law might afford matter of most profitable consideration to all. Let us observe how good the Law is, if a man use it lawfully. Let us observe how well the enactments of the Law accord with "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Under the Law there is no sentence against the righteous. And so also under the Gospel, "against such there is no law." Gal. 5. 23. Under the Law punishment is denounced against the lawless and disobedient, whatever be the form of their enormity. Under the Gospel it is no less plainly declared of such as do these things, that they "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 3. 21. Here then are matters which admit of no controversy, and yet are calculated to engage our most anxious attention. On these and such as these let us confer without disputing. Let us warn each other of our risk, lest we fall into these sins. Let us take sweet counsel together that we may make progress in this righteousness. Instead of arguing whether or no the Law be good, or the Gospel true, let us prove their truth and excellency, by using them lawfully, by living according to the rules they give, by believing, and obeying what is therein revealed.

St. Paul giveth thanks for his own conversion.

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should here-

after believe on him to life everlasting.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

20 Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

§ 595. *That we must thankfully conform to the will of God.*

See how God bends to the promoting of his own purposes the will of his most stubborn enemies! Saul the persecutor is put into the ministry. And Satan's malice is made to help in correcting Hymenæus and Alexander, that they may learn not to blaspheme. How vain then is all attempt of ours to frustrate the designs of the Most High! How foolish as well as wicked is it in us to murmur against the dispensations of Him, who is all powerful, all wise, all good! We murmur, and He chastens so much more. We set up our will for best; and He so much the more establishes his own. Oh, when shall we be content to cast all our care on Him, knowing that He careth for us? See 1 Pet. 5. 7. Oh, when shall we be satisfied to leave all that concerns us entirely to his ordering, knowing that whether we will or not, "his kingdom ruleth over all?" Ps. 103. 19.

St. Paul could now "thank Christ Jesus our Lord," who had enabled him to believe and obey the Gospel, who had called him to be an apostle, counting him faithful in the work. He could thankfully declare how he had obtained mercy, notwithstanding his blasphemies and the wrongs he had inflicted on the church, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. He was aware that in this instance the free gift of God was exceeding abundant, both in forgiving him his offences, and in giving him opportunity and grace to believe and to love. And whilst he felt that he had been chief of sinners, he could glory in this faithful saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This is the frame of mind which it is to be hoped that we shall come to, in whatsoever we have hitherto resisted God's will. To see the folly of our past course, to be thankful for having been thwarted and converted, to be sensible of the great mercy we experience in not being allowed to have our own way as we desired, to be not ashamed to own our bygone transgressions, but rather to make mention of them freely, on due occasions, as instances of God's abundant grace in forgiving us, and especially to feel that it is Christ who has saved us, that He came into the world to save sinners, that by Him and Him alone we are saved; this is the state of mind to which we must endeavour to attain, in proportion as we have been hitherto running counter to God's will. Nor must we suppose that it is for any worth of ours that God thus shews mercy on us. No; it is his own free goodness. It is in order that Christ may be glorified in our salvation. It is for this cause, that we having thus obtained mercy may be a pattern unto others, that they also may believe on Jesus Christ, unto everlasting life. Exalted privilege for sinful men; that we may do honour to the Son of God! Unlooked for gift of grace, that we, all unworthy as we are of the least of all God's mercies, should be set forth unto our brethren as instances of his utmost longsuffering and most signal goodness! How can we ever enough give thanks unto his name? How can we ever enough ascribe "unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," "honour and glory for ever and ever?"

St. Paul gives it in charge to Timothy that he should bear witness to the truth of these doctrines, and make known God's gracious dealings among men; reminding him that he had been the subject of prophesyings, and exhorting him to war the good warfare, "holding faith and a good conscience." In like manner it ought to be an encouragement to us, to feel that of us it has been foretold, that we should come to the light of Christ. "The Gentiles shall come to thy light." Is. 60. 3. The prophecies which "went before on" Timothy did not exempt him from risk of falling. And therefore he still needed this charge to persevere. The prophecies which have of old time spoken of ourselves as heirs of the kingdom of Christ, leave it still in our power, if we will, to put away "faith and a good conscience." Let us also beware lest we concerning faith make shipwreck. Let us also remember that there is such a thing as to be delivered unto Satan not only for sufferings in this world, but for the endless torments of hell fire. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," 2 Cor. 5. 11, let us the more faithfully cling to the hope of his mercies. Knowing how sad is the end of ungodliness, let us the more stedfastly cleave to that which is good.

Prayers for kings.

1 I || exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, ~~and~~ giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2 For kings, and for all that are in † authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, ‡ to be testified in due time.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

|| Or, *desire*.

† Or, *eminent place*.

8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with § brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

‡ Or, *a testimony*.

§ Or, *plaited*.

§ 596. *How women must behave.*

St. Paul would have us both in our prayers and in our thanksgivings make mention of all men. So affectionately ought we to feel towards all mankind! And especially he would have us do this for kings, and for all that are in authority. So great are the blessings which we derive from civil government! So greatly does the rule of civil governors assist us towards leading a quiet and peaceable life "in all godliness and honesty!" Let us try to conceive how great would be the confusion, if we were deprived of this wholesome restraint. Let us call to mind what misery has actually ensued where the laws and their due execution have been for a time suspended or set at nought. Let us think to ourselves, when we pray for kings, how manifold are the ills from which the rule of our kings keeps us free. Let us think when we give thanks for all that are in authority, how greatly we owe to them the manifold advantages of peace and plenty, upon earth, and the opportunity to pursue without disturbance our path towards everlasting joy in heaven.

This is the way in which God would have all men dwell; protected by good government from mutual wrongs, and assisted by the wholesome influence of the powers that be, in the knowledge of the truth and in the attainment of salvation. And this is God's will in our behalf, that all men should be saved, that all men should know the truth. And the truth is this, that there is "one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," even man as well as God, "who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Let us then pray that this truth may be testified to all men. Let us pray for peace and for good government, with a view to this blessed consequence, that by these means the Gospel may take deeper root, and more widely spread its branches, and more abundantly bear its fruit throughout all the world. Christ "gave himself a ransom for all." Whose fault is it, if it be not ours, that all men yet know not of this gift? Who but they which know of it already are bound to testify it unto them which are still ignorant? Oh that we therefore may help both by our prayers and by our gifts, towards the sending out preachers unto all lands, to teach "the Gentiles in faith and verity." Oh that they who have been instructed how to pray, may be every where engaged in intercession before God, "lifting up holy hands," having their lives answerable to their prayers; "without wrath and doubting," having peace amongst each other, and peace with God!

Nor must these duties of public prayer and thanksgiving, be neglected by Christian women. Only they must on such occasions be especially on their guard against a sin which most easily besets them, excess of apparel. They must remember on all occasions that their greatest ornaments are "shamefacedness and sobriety;" and "good works." In these let them delight to be eminent. Ill would it become their sex to set up for teachers of the rest, when they have been told to "learn in silence with all subjection." Ill would it become the woman, especially in the ordinances of religion, "to usurp authority over the man;" when St. Paul has here directed her "to be in silence." No, let her remember, which first was formed, not Eve but Adam. This is one ground of man's precedence. Next let her observe which first was deceived, which first was guilty of transgression; not Adam but Eve. This is the chief inferiority of the woman. To be first in sin is to be last in the esteem of God. Notwithstanding, God be praised, the last may oftentimes be first. The first of sinners, and the last, the chiefest or the least, all are alike called unto salvation, through the precious blood of Christ. Unto all, for the benefit of all, a Child is born; unto all, for the salvation of all, a Son is given. See Isa. 9. 6. That Child, the seed of the woman; that Son, the Son of God most High. And all, whether they be men or women, all shall through Christ be saved, all who "continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

St. Paul declareth how bishops ought to be qualified.

1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 † Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his

children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

6 Not † a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

|| Or, modest.

† Or, Not ready to quarrel, and offer wrong, as one in wine.

‡ Or, one newly come to the faith.

§ 597. *What is required of them who rule the church of God.*

How many things does the apostle here require of such as shall be fit for the work of the ministry, whether as a bishop, or as an elder or priest. He that desires this holy office, desires indeed an excellent work. But it is a work which needs an excellent workman. How often need ministers say within themselves; "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2. 16. How kindly ought the rest to consider the difficulties of their office, and to make allowances for their manifold imperfections!

To be "blameless" is the first point noted. And this St. Paul elsewhere mentions as his own practice, "giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed." 2 Cor. 6. 3. The sins of ministers never come single; besides offending God, they bring discredit on the Gospel in which they minister. Next they must be sure that in the matter of marriage they set due bounds to their desires, not only not marrying two wives at once, which among the heathen was no uncommon practice, but also not hasting to marry one after another. They must be "vigilant;" for the enemy of souls is always "seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. And therefore they who are set in office to prevent his success, must be always on the watch against his wiles. They must be "sober;" which here means soberminded; for afterwards we read "not given to wine." They must be "of good behaviour," conducting themselves with propriety towards all with whom they come into contact; "given to hospitality," fond of asking those who ask not again; see Luke 14. 12; "apt to teach," both willing and able to impart to others their own peace and joy in believing.

"Not given to wine," is another point of great importance in the character of a minister of the Gospel. For there is no sin more scandalous than drunkenness; no sin which more generally exposes the sinner to the scorn and censure of the beholders. He must also be "no striker," no, nor apt to quarrel; not addicted to wrangling in controversy, or to litigation in his temporal affairs. Nor must he be "greedy of filthy lucre." But on the contrary he must be "patient;" willing to put up with wrongs and blows, rather than return them; "no brawler," one who when he is reviled reviles not again; "not covetous," one who has no love for money in his heart, but is free to give, free to spend, and content to lose it, if it so happen, not sorry to have so much the less to answer for unto God. He must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection," and this is to be done not by harsh severity, but by kindness, "with all gravity." For a man's fitness for the office of ruling others, may be known by his ability to rule his own family. And they to whom is entrusted the care of God's church, are in some sort commissioned to rule the rest; though only under the authority of the King of kings. He must be "not a novice," not one newly converted to the faith, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" become liable to the same sentence, as having been guilty of the same sin. So apt is knowledge newly gained to puff up its possessor! So much more likely are they who have known more and longer, to be aware that they as yet know little! So sure are they to fall who are lifted up with pride! So like is their fall to the fall of Satan and of his angels; their sin and their condemnation so near akin to his!

And yet again at the end it is set down of a bishop, that "he must have a good report of them which are without," even as at the beginning it is required of him to be "blameless." It is one thing to be proud, conceited, vain. It is another to have an eye to what men think or say of us, with a view to giving no one any cause of scandal. And this is a distinction which the rulers of the flock of Christ are most especially bound to keep in view. So ready are the rest to plead the failings of ministers in extenuation of their own, that in their case concealment seems almost to be a duty; and when they are transgressors, they need be at the same time hypocrites. Most awful condition; most loathsome to themselves; to know themselves to be guilty in God's sight, of the very sins which they are denouncing in their brethren! To be aware that they are transgressors against God, in the very duties, of which their brethren are taking them for examples! Oh that all who are in this pitiable case, may take the only safe way of avoiding scandal, even to sin no more! Oh that they, who are set over others in the Lord, may not only be without blame, but also unblameable; not only have a good report, but also do that which is good, and love to do it always, as unto the Lord!

The qualifications of deacons.

likewise ~~must~~ the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

11 Even so *must* their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 For they that have || used the office of a deacon

|| Or, ministered.

well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and † ground of the truth.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

† Or, stay.

§ 598. *The mystery of godliness.*

Most of the qualities here mentioned in the character of a deacon, have been already dwelt upon in the character of a bishop. For the first office is of the same nature as the last; and the one is the way through which men pass unto the other. But even deacons must "first be proved." No one must be admitted even into the lowest order of the ministry, without trial and examination had, in the several matters which are here pointed out. Many are the precautions wisely taken, according to the order of our church, to prevent the admission of unfit persons to the sacred office. Most serious is the responsibility which rests on those who ordain. Most searching are the questions put to those who are ordained. Most weighty is the injunction given to the people amongst whom they have previously dwelt, that if any one know just cause why they should not be ordained, he come forward without delay and report it to the bishop. But how easily may they who examine be deceived! How easily may a man deceive himself as to his own fitness, his own motives, his own calling! How easily are the people tempted, out of false shame or false good nature, to withhold the information which they are bound to give, in case they know of the candidate's unfitness! Thus it is that there are sometimes ministers to be met with, who are lightminded instead of "grave," "double tongued," "given to much wine," "greedy of filthy lucre," ignorant of the faith, and impure in conscience. And these are not unlikely to have for wives not the grave but the gay, such as are apt to spread slander instead of healing strife, not sober but giddy, not faithful in all things, but busy about many things, and neglectful in the one thing needful. Happy are those women, who living according to the rule here laid down by the apostle, are adorned with a character like to that of ministers! Happy are those deacons, who, having been first proved, use the office of a deacon well, and thus ministering of the truth to others, grow also, their own selves, in grace and holiness, in the boldness of faith and hope!

St. Paul sent these particulars in writing to Timothy, for his instruction as to whom he should ordain; that he might know how he ought to behave in this matter, of so great importance to the church of the living God. For Timothy, though young, was entrusted with the oversight of the whole church at Ephesus. And there was no point in all his office of more weight, than the appointment of those, who under himself were to overlook the rest. For see how great a charge is in the hands of ministers, to feed the flock of Christ, to rule, to watch for, to edify, that church which is "the pillar and ground of the truth!" And see how great is "the mystery of godliness," which it is the office of ministers to preach and to explain! "God was manifest in the flesh;" in the person of Christ Jesus. God was "justified in the Spirit;" this also in the person of Jesus Christ, to whom the Spirit bare witness both by prophecy and miracle. God was "seen of angels," when in the person of Jesus Christ He wrought redemption for his people, "which things angels desire to look into." 1 Pet. 1. 12. God was "preached unto the Gentiles," when Christ was preached to the Gentiles. God was "believed on in the world," when Christ was believed on in the world. God was "received up into glory," when Christ was received up into glory. Oh mystery past man's conception! Oh mystery which angels gaze on with delight! Oh marvellous grace of God, that He has revealed all these things for our instruction! Oh most solemn of all charges with which man can be entrusted, to be put in trust with the ministry of this Gospel! The mystery is revealed, and men are made to help in revealing it. It is revealed. Even unto the Gentiles it is preached. Even in this wicked world there are some found who believe in Christ. They believe; and believers are the church. And the church thus formed is "the pillar and ground of the truth." It is the body of believers which puts the truth in a firm and commanding attitude before the eyes of the whole race of mankind. God grant that the ground may in no case prove unsound! God grant that no stone in all this goodly pillar may prove weak in its connexion, or unworthy of its place!

St. Paul telleth Timothy what to teach and do.

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life

that now is, and of that which is to come.

9 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.

10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

11 These things command and teach.

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear * to all.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

|| Or, for a little time.

* Or, in all things.

§ 599. *Real godliness opposed to doctrines of devils.*

Let us take warning against the errors of which the Spirit here "speaketh expressly." Let us beware of these "seducing spirits." Let not us adopt these "doctrines of devils." Let not us be induced to listen unto those false teachers, who speak lies in hypocrisy; who know that what they say is false, and who are notwithstanding so hardened in conscience that they persist in saying it as the truth. Such are they who forbid to marry, as if God had not Himself declared, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Gen. 2. 18. Such are they who would have us to abstain from meats, as though any one were less allowable than any other, as though God had not created all "to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." "Every creature of God is good." Every thing which He has made is to be used according to the use for which He made it, is to be received with thankfulness towards Him who gave it. "For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." It is holy to us, if we use it as God has directed us; if we pray for his blessing in the use of it. Vain then are these devices of men, here called "profane and old wives' fables," to substitute trifling distinctions in food, or imaginary holiness in a single life, which at the most are mere "bodily exercise," for "the words of faith and of good doctrine," for that godliness which "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Let us listen to this faithful saying. Let us not be backward to accept it. Let us be neither slow to labour, nor reluctant to endure reproach, out of our trust in the living God, that He will make good his word. He "is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." Therefore let us be tenfold more ready to deny ourselves, out of respect to his faithfulness and love, than ever we could have been out of the vain conceit that there is worth in what we do to secure his favour.

Such are the views of truth and duty which Timothy is here directed to teach and to command; and also to recommend by his own example, "in word, in conversation" or behaviour, "in charity, in spirit" a spiritual frame of mind, "in faith" or the profession of it, "in purity," both of heart and life. And for the more effectual dissemination of the Gospel, he was to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." He was to study what had been well said by others, and above all, what had been written by those holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. See 2 Pet. 1. 21. He was to read and learn, that he might be able to exhort and teach. He was to watch that he neglected not the gift that was in him, the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, the office of the ministry, to which he had been appointed by special prophecy, and yet not without the laying on of the hands of other ministers. But the more eminent was his outward calling and office, he was so much the more bound to meditate upon that which he had to teach, and to give himself wholly to the teaching of it, that his profiting might appear unto all men. For by taking heed to himself and to his doctrine, and continuing stedfast in the things he taught, he might, through God's great goodness, both save himself and them that heard him. Oh glorious privilege of ministers, to be helpful in the saving of their fellow creatures! Oh marvellous efficacy of truth, to be able to save them that hear! God be praised that we have heard! God help us to obey! God grant that we may long to help in telling others, what has given peace and joy unto ourselves!

Of christian widows.

1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

3 Honour widows that are widows indeed.

4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew || piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

6 But she that liveth * in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

7 And these things give in charge that they may be blameless.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own † house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

9 Let not a widow be ‡ taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

|| Or, *kindness.*

* Or, *delicately.*

† Or, *kindred.*

‡ Or, *chosen.*

¶ Gr. *for their railing.*

10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not.

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion ¶ to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

15 For some are already turned aside after Satan.

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

§ 600. *Female usefulness.*

Ministers are here taught to look upon themselves, rather as helpers of their brethren, than as having dominion over their faith. See 2 Cor. 1. 24. Thus Timothy is instructed, in the exercise of his authority, to pay respect to the years of the aged, to entreat them as one would request a father; "and the younger men as brethren," not eager to use authority, but rather willing to appeal to love. And in like manner he was to entreat "the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." Here let us all, and not ministers alone, let us learn how to behave to one another. Let us view all our fellow creatures as though they belonged to one or other of these classes; and treat the old all as fathers or mothers, the younger all as brethren or sisters.

In his government of the church, Timothy has here particular directions as to widows; who appear under that name to have held the office of teachers, for the instruction of young female converts. These were to be honoured, provided for out of the common fund, when "widows indeed," when destitute of any children or descendants, who were able to maintain them. Else it was not fitting for the church to be charged. But in case a widow were left really friendless, she would be the more likely to trust entirely in God, she would be the less likely to live in pleasure; which is in truth to be dead whilst we live. That there might be no risk of any such scandal, St. Paul directs that none should be "taken into the number," except such as were of advanced age, and had been but once married, had a good character for benevolence, had well brought up such children as God had given them, had been hospitable, attentive, bountiful, and diligent in well doing. As for the younger widows, he preferred that they should again marry, and discharge the duties of wife, and mother, and mistress of a family. Nor would he have them by any means be admitted to the office of widows of the church. For if they should be tempted to "wax wanton against Christ," and marry again after they had devoted themselves to the service of the church in widowhood, this would both bring scandal on their office and condemnation on themselves. And though they should not go the whole length of "casting off their first faith," renouncing the office of a widow, yet would be apt to become idle in their proper business, and busy both in doing and "speaking things which they ought not."

How forcibly are the dangers here described which beset the female servants of Christ, in any duties which are in any degree of a public nature! What can be more scandalous to the cause she undertakes, what more hurtful to herself, than for her activity in the work of edifying her neighbours to degenerate into worldly conversation, to be made the cloak of idleness, talkativeness, censoriousness, of a disposition to spread slander abroad, rather than to do work at home! But shall the snares of Satan deter us from at all entering on the path of duty? No; let our Christian mothers and sisters, each according to her age and station, delight to do good as far as possible unto all mankind. In their youth they may pray much and give much for public objects. And by the faithful discharge of their domestic duties, they may lay in store that report for good works, which will justify them, as years advance, in more enlarged exertions for the honour of their Lord. Until at length, whether they be widows, or married, or single, they may do the work of widowhood, though the office be no more, and give good help, especially amongst the young of their own sex, in turning many to the love of Christ.

Of the maintenance and ordering of ministers.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

18 For the scripture saith, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, 'The labourer is worthy of his reward.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but || before two or three witnesses.

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these

things * without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

25 Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

¹ Deut. 25. 4.

² Matt. 10. 10.

|| Or, under.

* Or, without prejudice.

§ 601. *Against partaking in other men's sins.*

Since "every creature of God is good," and to be "received with thanksgiving," ch. 4. 4, who can doubt that God would have the ministers of his word enjoy of the abundance of the earth? And since it is their duty to devote their time to the sowing unto the rest in spiritual things, who that profits by their labours, can grudge that they should reap of the rest in carnal things? Ought we not rather to seize gladly each opportunity that offers, for rewarding with our worldly goods the labourer of our spiritual harvest? And are we not bound, as far as lies in our power, to put in practice the directions here given for the apportionment of the labourer's reward? Oh that those of us who have ought to pay* to ministers, may never "muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," may never pay grudgingly or as of necessity, but freely, cheerfully, and abundantly! Oh that those who have voice or influence in allotting the patrimony of the church, may conscientiously endeavour, to the best of their judgment, to give most large honour and emolument to "the elders that rule well," to those who most "labour in the word and doctrine!"

But alas! it is no uncommon thing for the clergy, instead of being held in honour of their brethren, to be the marked objects of censure, slander, and indignity! So apt are men to fancy that any fault which they can find or feign in their teachers, may serve for excuse of like failings in themselves! So unreasonably do they expect that perfection in their fellow creatures, which is to be met with only in our One great High Priest, eternal in the heavens! Well might each private Christian herein adopt the rule, which is prescribed to Timothy concerning an elder, to receive no accusation against such, "but before two or three witnesses." Hush, let us say to those who are finding fault with our pastor, I dare not so much as listen to your accusation, much less can I listen with satisfaction. If what you say be true, it could do me no good to hear of it. Take the charge to them which are in authority. Take with you at least two or three witnesses, and lay the matter before the rulers of the church. It is their duty to inquire. It is their duty, and I trust that they will discharge it faithfully; it is their duty to rebuke before all the ministers who sin, "that others also may fear." I trust that they will not forget the apostle's solemn charge, to observe these things "without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." However much inconvenience it may cost us, let us not refrain in such a case, from offering them our testimony as to the things we know. This may help to justice. And whether it substantiate innocence, or tend to the removal of the guilty, it will promote the glory of Christ. But let us, at the same time, be continually on the watch that we neither revile nor suffer others in our presence to revile our ministers in private. Such censure is more easy, and to our selfish nature more agreeable, than a public accusation. But it is at once cruel and unjust to them, hurtful to ourselves, and detrimental to the honour of our Lord.

But how much better is precaution in ordaining ministers, so as that none shall need rebuke, than faithful severity in rebuking them that sin! How much is it to be desired that they who are entrusted with the divine commission, should "lay hands suddenly on no man," should never communicate the office of bishop, priest, or deacon, without ample time allowed for full enquiry, and for proof of the capacity and character, the zeal, faithfulness, and gravity, of those whom they appoint! How great is their risk, if they appoint improperly, of being partakers of other men's sins! How hard it is for them, in some cases, to know beforehand what the characters of other men will prove; seeing that whilst some are easily discerned, others, however faulty, are for a time concealed, though in the end they "cannot be hid." And this risk besets us all, in all appointments, in all engagements, in all intercourse we hold amongst each other. We are liable to be deceived. We are partakers, if through carelessness of ours we prefer the wicked to the good, we are partakers of other men's sins. Let us therefore watch and exert ourselves that we keep ourselves pure; not refusing to act, for fear of acting wrong, but acting with diligence and caution, with trust in God's guidance, and dependence on his mercy; not abstaining from the enjoyment of God's gifts for fear of using them to excess, but using them thankfully, within the bounds He sets us; to our own greater comfort and his greater glory.

Religion must not be made a cloak of covetousness.

1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed.

2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they are || faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

4 He is * proud, knowing nothing, but † doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

|| Or, believing.

* Or, a fool.

† Or, sick,

5 † Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have ¶ erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

‡ Or, gallings one of another.

¶ Or, been seduced.

§ 602. *The love of money the root of all evil.*

The same Gospel which inclines masters to give liberty to their slaves, teaches slaves to be submissive to the power of their owners. For such was the state of servitude, and such were the servants signified, when this Epistle was written. Nor is this less true of the present time, in the duties of the two classes, master and servant; the master must be less inclined to assume authority, the servant more disposed to obey. This is that which either party gains by godliness; not advantage at the other's cost, but a temper that delights in the other's benefit. The master may not reason: Because the servant is taught to honour me, therefore I may more safely domineer. Nor may the servant conclude: If my master be an ill liver, I am better than he, and owe him no respect; or, if he be a Christian indeed, he is no more than my brother, and therefore we are on a footing of equality. This would be mere pride and ignorance, "questions and strifes of words whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds;" whose notion is, that godliness may be made a stepping stone to mere worldly advantages. From such let us withdraw ourselves, from such men, and from the notions which they hold; from all who either in this matter, or in any other, make religion the mere cloak of ambition or of avarice, of pride, or perversity, or party spirit. These are not the ends for which truth has been revealed, the truth which makes us free. See John 8. 32. This is not the liberty to which Christ has called us. See Gal. 5. 1. The master may not be oppressive; but neither must the servant be disrespectful. The creditor must be free to forgive the debtor; but the debtor is also exhorted, "owe no man any thing." Rom. 13. 8. He that is smitten on the one cheek is bidden to present the other. But woe be to him that smites. And though he whose goods are taken away is told not to exact them back again, see Luke 6. 30, yet the robber is also warned on the other hand, "let him that stole steal no more." Eph. 4. 28. Neither party may venture to take advantage of the piety of the other. Neither may dare to turn their own liberty into a cloak of maliciousness. See 1 Pet. 2. 16.

And yet "godliness with contentment is great gain." It is great gain in this world, as well as in the next; only not in respect of mere worldly advantages. It is in respect of peace, and joy, whether we have much or little, whether we be masters or servants, whether bond or free, it is in respect of peace such as this world cannot give, joy such as is a foretaste of the joy of heaven; it is in these things that the godly have the advantage over the wicked, it is in these that their gain is great. For they whose hearts are set on worldly wealth, "fall into temptation and a snare;" the temptation to dishonesty, the snare of taking anxious thought for the morrow. "And into many foolish and hurtful lusts;" foolish because all that wealth can bestow on earth, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" Eccles. 1. 14; hurtful, because it not only vexes them whilst here, but helps to drown them in endless destruction. "For the love of money is the root of all evil." Hence men become selfish instead of loving one another; hence lovers of gain more than lovers of God. Hence children are induced to dishonour their parents, that they may have more to enjoy for themselves. Hence wives are led astray to commit adultery. Hence thieves transgress and steal, nay stop not short of murder. Hence witnesses are ready to give false evidence. And sinners, who out of the fear of man, neither rob, nor murder, nor forswear, hence dare, in spite of God's command, to covet. Hence sabbath-breaking, hence perjury, abound. Hence even under Gospel light almost whole nations are idolaters, for covetousness is idolatry; yea, money is the covetous man's god. See Eph. 5. 5. Never may we suffer that root to be implanted in our hearts, which bears a tree so poisonous! Never may we covet gains which tend to error from the faith, and to pierce our hearts with endless woe! Never may we forget that as we brought nothing into this world, it is certain that we can carry nothing out! Never may we fail to be content with what we have, as long as we have food and raiment; nay also, if it be God's will, when we are destitute of both!

St. Paul exhorteth Timothy to be obedient.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man

|| Or, *profession*.

* Gr. *uncertainty of riches*.

† Or, *sociable*.

hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in * uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, † willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

§ 603. *How urgently we are charged to keep God's commandments.*

With what earnestness does the apostle here counsel Timothy to be on his guard against the love of money! "Thou, O man of God, flee these things." Ill as it becomes any one who names the name of Christ to be greedy of gain, most of all is it a disgrace, most of all is it a snare of endless perdition, to those who are the ministers of his Gospel. With what anxiety, when he seemed to have finished his Epistle, did St. Paul revert to this same peril of covetousness, bidding Timothy charge all who possessed worldly wealth, that they trust not in their riches, but in the living God. So hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! So deeply did St. Paul feel for their danger and difficulty! So entirely did he, notwithstanding, rely on the promise that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Luke 18. 27. "Charge them," this warning is always needful, and it will not be always without success, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded." To have money and to trust in it, is as perilous as to have it not and to covet it. To love it, this is the sin. This is the sinfulness of the sinner. To trust in God, this is our safety. To be thankful to Him for what we have, to do good with what He has given us, to be rich not "in this world" but "in good works," to be more ready to give than to receive, to lay up by these means treasure in heaven; this is the way to lay hold on that eternal life, which God has given us for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And for this it is not enough that we flee covetousness. We must also "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." We must "fight the good fight of faith." We must consider how we have been called unto eternal life, and have professed the good profession before many witnesses, even when we were dedicated to Christ, before the church in baptism. This is that godliness which is great gain; not merely to keep clean from pollution of evil, but to advance in all that is good. To be always in pursuit of all that is most excellent. To follow with the same eagerness as they that hunt for prey, with the speed and perseverance of them that pursue a flying enemy, to follow after all God's commandments to do them, after all his truth to believe it, after all his love, patience, and forbearance, to be as He is, to love as He has loved us, to be patient and meek to one another, as He has been long suffering to usward.

But what a contest is this for us to sustain, what a battle for us to fight, what a calling for us to answer unto, what a profession for us to put in practice! Let us help ourselves by laying to heart the solemn charge which St. Paul has here given to Timothy. Let us consider ourselves as entrusted with these commandments in the sight of God our Father, and in the presence of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who for our sakes "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." Let us consider that we are to keep this commandment "without spot," and set ourselves no half and half obedience, sure to lead to no obedience at all. Let us persevere in keeping it unrebukeable, "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." That day is at hand. That appearing God will make manifest in due season. Let us therefore keep with care that which is committed to our trust, the true doctrines of the Gospel; and lay out with a view to heavenly gain, that which is of no other real use on earth, the mammon of unrighteousness. Far be it from us either to err "concerning the faith," or to transgress in this matter of practice! The one is nearly connected with the other. The most sound doctrine binds to the most holy living. Whilst they who hold for doctrines the commandments of men, are least likely to pay reverence to the will of God.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO TIMOTHY. 1. 1—10.

St. Paul prayeth for Timothy, and exhorteth him.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou

stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

9 Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;

10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

§ 604. *How we ought to stir up in one another the gift of God.*

This is known to be one of the last in order of all St. Paul's Epistles. It was written during his imprisonment at Rome, probably near the time when he suffered martyrdom. Whilst persecution was at its height, when many out of the fear of man were falling away from faith in Christ, and when the apostle was expecting daily his own turn to suffer, he writes to his beloved Timothy, for the purpose of confirming him in the Gospel. Happy was this aged servant of the Lord, who in the midst of tribulation still could glory in the name of the Lord's apostle, who could be glad to think that this his office was "by the will of God," and who was sure that whatever suffering it might expose him to on earth, it was his way to enjoy "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus!" And happy was his son Timothy, dearly beloved in Christ, to receive the prayer of the apostle's dying lips, that he might have "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord!" Let this be the kind of blessing we crave from our parents, when they offer their last prayer in our behalf. Let us remember to use words like these ourselves, when death summons us to part from our own children.

From St. Paul we may here further learn what things are fit matters of thanksgiving. He thanks God for his having remembered Timothy in his prayers. Let us pray that we may be thankful. Let us give thanks, if we have prayed, let us give thanks that we have had grace to pray. Let us give thanks that we have been enabled to remember in our prayers the friends whom most we love, whom most we desire to see, those of whom we have most ground to hope that they have in them faith unfeigned. The apostle says of himself that he served God from his forefathers, meaning that his parents and family had been devout servants of God. And of Timothy he makes mention of the faithfulness which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice. Well is it with those children whose mother is a devout servant of Christ. Well is it with those mothers who carefully bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

But if we have joy in remembering these things of our friends, let us so much the more earnestly call on them to stir up the gift of God which is in them. From the midst of tribulation, if it be our lot to suffer trouble for righteousness' sake, let us assure them that God has not given us the spirit of fear, let us exhort them to aim at getting, as his gift from heaven, the spirit "of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Let us urge them not to be "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," nor of those who suffer evil for his sake; but rather to be partakers "of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God," who is able to make them rejoice in tribulation. Think, let us say to such as seem likely to draw back, or at least not eager to come forward, think how great God's power is, how able He is to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Consider, He "hath saved us." Consider, He hath "called us with an holy calling." See how it is "not according to our works," evil as they are usually, and unprofitable at the best, "but according to his own purpose and grace," a purpose beyond our skill to fathom, a free gift of grace beyond our understanding to conceive, "which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." And now behold it is made manifest. The mystery is in Christ made clear. Christ has by his death "abolished death." By his Gospel He has "brought life and immortality to light." Who then would not gladly suffer affliction with his people for a season, that they may rejoice with Him for ever? Who would not here even die if it were needful, much more endure scorn and cruelty, that they may live with Him and with his saints, in glory, and honour, and immortality?

St. Paul is not ashamed.

11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have || believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing, which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.

15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:

17 But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.

18 The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

|| Or, *trusted*.

§ 605. *Warning and encouragement.*

There is scarcely anything more difficult in suffering adversity, than not to be ashamed of it. Whether it be imprisonment, or stripes, whether loss of fortune or of friends, that we are called upon to endure, in any case, pride prompts us to conceal our affliction, pride teaches us to suppress our tears. But see how different is the influence of the Gospel. See how different is the practice of St. Paul. "Nevertheless I am not ashamed." I glory in having been "appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." I glory in having been privileged to suffer for this cause. I deny not that I feel these sufferings. I care not who knows that I am a prisoner, I am confined as a malefactor, and likely to be put to death as a traitor. Nay, rather I care that all should know it. I would have all men see how great is the power of faith. I would have all men be aware that "I know whom I have believed," and that this knowledge gives me confidence in suffering; for "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." What matter a few reproaches for a season, the loss of worldly goods, or liberty, or life, if we have treasure secure in heaven? The body may suffer hardship, but the soul is safe; nay, body and soul shall both live together in joy for ever. Our earthly home may be given to another, or our earthly house of this tabernacle may be dissolved. But we have another and a better home, amongst the many mansions of our heavenly Father; we have prepared for us a building of God, a house eternal in the heavens. See 2 Cor. 5. 1.

But in order for us to feel this confidence, how absolutely is it needful that we continue steadfast in the truth, that we "hold fast the form of sound words," the same as those in which Timothy was instructed by St. Paul, "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus!" How steadfastly, if we would enjoy this boldness before men, and this hope towards God, how steadfastly must we keep that good thing which has been committed unto us, keep it "by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." Yes, we are entrusted with a sacred deposit. We have had committed unto us the truth as it is in Jesus. We are bound to preserve it pure, for our own use. We are bound to hand it down unto our children after us, without aught added thereto or taken therefrom. Yes; the Holy Ghost "dwelleth in us." God has given us also of his Spirit. He is in us, strengthening us. He will make us able to hold fast the profession of our faith, "steadfast unto the end." Heb. 3. 14.

But let us take warning. There were some that fell away from the faith, turning away from the apostle, when he was in bondage, falling away from the faith when it was under persecution. Let us take warning. Though the Holy Ghost dwell in us, we are liable to be seduced into grieving and resisting Him. We need to be exhorted to activity, watchfulness, and perseverance, lest we be likened unto "all them which are in Asia," lest we be numbered with "Phygellus and Hermogenes." And whilst on the one hand we derive a salutary fear from the backsliding of the faithless, let us on the other derive a cheerful hope from the many instances on record of the courage and fidelity in them that have persevered. Onesiphorus oft refreshed the apostle, in his bonds. He was not ashamed of the apostle's bondage. In Rome, that great capital, full of pomps and vanities, he sought out the prisoner very diligently, and found him. At Ephesus too, where the apostle had been in utmost jeopardy, he ministered to him in many things. May we be hence encouraged to persevere in well doing. May we prefer to seek the prisoner, and to minister to his wants, though it be to our loss or risk, rather than to enjoy safety and advantage with them that are at large. And may the Lord, who alone can give us the heart thus to visit, as He describes it, Himself in prison, may the Lord grant unto us, that we may find mercy in that day, when He shall say: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25. 40.

How much is required of a minister.

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

4 No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

6 * The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.

7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel:

|| Or, *by*.

9 Wherein I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11 *It is a faithful saying*: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

14 Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers.

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

* Or, *The husbandman, labouring first, must be partaker of the fruits.*

§ 606. *God's faithfulness in rewards and punishments.*

In the ordinance of ministers we see provision for the perpetual remembrance of the Gospel. "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." And were it not for this ordinance we could easily conceive that even these best of tidings would be forgotten among mankind. So averse is the human heart to spiritual things! So prone are the children of men to overlook the chief mercies they have received! So few are found capable of feeling that it is a pleasant thing to be thankful! So incomplete for this purpose was the written word, especially at a time when few could read! So often, even in the hands of able readers, do the Scriptures lie neglected and dishonoured, until the living minister, faithful to his trust, forces on the attention his precious but unwelcome message, and persuades those who will receive it to hear and live!

But "who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2. 16. How many excellencies are required of him who should be well qualified to minister to his brethren! To "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" not to work in his own strength, but to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," Eph. 6. 10, this is of the first importance. To "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;" this also is most needful in a minister, that he should shrink from no difficulty, flinch from no pain, in the discharge of his appointed duty. He must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life; being herein also likened unto a soldier, whose sole business on earth is to obey the will of his commander. He must work, not according to his own will, but in compliance with the settled order of the ministry; being herein like a wrestler in the games, who is "not crowned, except he strive lawfully." He must be diligent and persevering in his work, without expecting to see at once any adequate return; like the husbandman, who labouring first, is not till afterwards partaker of the fruits. (See marginal reading.) And as a skilful workman, whether in husbandry, or in any other business, is known by his work being straight and even; so he who has to minister "the word of truth," must shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, by the skill, readiness, and correctness, with which he handles and expounds the oracles of God.

Here we have some of the chief things insisted on, of which the faithful minister is to put the rest in remembrance. "Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead." "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Such is the salvation which is offered to the elect, even that "which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." And let us hear also what is their condemnation: "if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself." No. It is no impeachment of God's faithfulness, if out of those whom He has called, some will not hear, if out of those whom He has chosen to partake of endless glory, some love the darkness rather. "He abideth faithful." He fulfils all that He has promised. Nay, his faithfulness is also shewn in this, that He inflicts the woe which He has threatened. "He cannot deny himself." He cannot unsay what He has once plainly declared: "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10. 33. There is after death "the judgment." Heb. 9. 27. He who died for us, and was raised from the dead, He is to be our Judge. This is the barrier which He has firmly set up, against all abuse of his boundless love. He died that we might be reconciled to the Father, admitted to the inheritance of the saints in light. He lives, not only that He may be glorified in them that believe, but also that He may judge the world in righteousness.

Timothy is instructed what to shun and what to follow.

16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a || canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus;

18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth † sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these,

he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, ‡ patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may ¶ recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are § taken captive by him at his will.

|| Or, gangrene.

† Or, steady.

‡ Or, forbearing.

¶ Gr. awake.

§ Gr. taken alive.

§ 607. *The tone and topics of edifying conversation.*

Most important are these instructions to ministers of the Gospel, most valuable to all Christians who desire to let their light shine before men, and to practise for God's glory, an edifying conversation. We must shun profane and vain babblings; "for they will increase unto more ungodliness." We must watch that we never join carelessly in worldly conference, so as to sanction by our assent, or even by our silence, the false and fatal principles of the world. These things propagate evil from one to another. Words such as these "eat as doth a canker." And especially when worldly notions are suffered to contaminate religious topics, when the truths of the Gospel are discussed, for the amusement of the mind, and not for the edification of the soul, then the faith of some is overturned, then the faith of many is endangered. For then the parties talking are apt to be seeking out not what is most true, most affecting, most improving; but what is most ingenious, most astonishing, most new. And "man, whose breath is in his nostrils," Isa. 2. 22, whose life hangs upon a thread, spends the present, the only moment which he can call his own, in trifling with the concerns of eternity.

But though some should by means like these be moved from this spiritual building the church of Christ, "the foundation of God standeth sure." And as it was declared by Moses, in the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: "The Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy;" and again, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men;" Numb. 16. 5, 26; so in this house of God, the Christian church, it is no less strictly true that "the Lord knoweth them that are his," it is no less absolutely required that "every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." God cannot be deceived by pretence of righteousness, whilst the heart is far from Him. God knows in his own house which vessels are "of gold and of silver," which "of wood and of earth," which "to honour," and which "to dishonour." It is required of us that we keep ourselves clean from the contamination of false doctrine and faulty practice, if we would be "vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Let us then "flee youthful lusts," both those sins of the flesh, and those extravagant imaginations of the heart, which in the time of youth most struggle for the mastery. Let us follow, for behold Christ leads the way, let us follow "righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." St. Paul would by no means have either Timothy or us stand still in our Christian progress. We must flee, and also we must follow. Sin is in pursuit. Need we yet another spur? Holiness and happiness are before us. Oh how can we stay to talk of trifles, or talk in a trifling manner of heavenly realities, when we have hell behind us, and heaven before, when earth is ready to vanish away, and God is waiting to be gracious to us for ever?

Of these things let us converse, seriously and affectionately, under the conviction that they deeply concern our own souls, and the everlasting welfare of our brethren. This is true learning, this real wisdom, to learn the way of peace, to be wise unto salvation. These are questions which gender not strife, but harmony, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16. 30. How may we best escape the wrath to come? How may we most love each other and our Lord? On these things, and such as these, let us dwell long and often in mutual conference. And if there be any that oppose themselves to the truth, let us not strive with them in contention of words, but instruct them in meekness; speaking not as if the truth were doubtful, as if its victory were merely gainful to ourselves, but as if we were wishing it to prevail for the sake of those whom we instruct, who are "taken captive by Satan at his will," even as he delights to have it, and who can recover themselves only if God "give them repentance," a new heart and mind, "to the acknowledging of the truth."

That there must be perilous times in the last days.

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, || false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, † reprobate concerning the faith.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was.

|| Or, *makebates*.

† Or, *of no judgment*.

10 But ‡ thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;

17 That the man of God may be perfect, ¶ thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

‡ Or, *thou hast been a diligent follower of*.

¶ Or, *perfected*.

§ 608. *Scripture the guide of life.*

The holy Scriptures take frequent occasion of warning us, that notwithstanding all God's goodness in the Gospel, "iniquity shall abound." Matt. 24. 12. We need not wonder therefore that it has hitherto abounded. We must expect as years go on, and we are further advanced in the last days, the times will be more perilous, the abundance of iniquity will be greater. We have been warned. Let us beware. Let us watch lest we be selfish, greedy of gain, boastful, haughty, apt to take God's name in vain, apt to disobey our parents, averse to give thanks, averse to be holy. Let us watch that we cherish natural affection, are faithful to our agreements, bear no false witness against our neighbour, set all due restraint upon ourselves, are meek instead of fierce, and love those that are good, instead of despising them. Let us watch that we never betray them that repose trust in us, that we be not headstrong, arrogant, more fond of pleasure than of God, and practically gainsayers of the power of godliness, at the very time when we maintain its outward form. Against these things let us be on our guard in ourselves. From such as do these things let us "turn away;" even from such as use the cloak of religion to gain an influence in the domestic circle, especially addressing themselves to the weaker sex, and amongst them to the most unstable; being themselves "reprobate concerning the faith."

Now let it not be supposed, that herein one single country only, or one single age, or one single religious community is intended. This is the fallacy which men commonly adopt, because it shifts the peril, or seems to do so, from themselves to their brethren. But how without precaution shall we ourselves escape? And what precaution are we likely to take, unless we be convinced of danger? Have we not in our own time, and amongst ourselves, instances very numerous of the enormities here insisted on? Have we not among the members of our own community the selfish, the proud, the covetous, the dissipated, the hypocrite? Is the time yet come that they proceed no further? Is their folly yet manifest to all men? Are not many amongst ourselves in grievous ignorance of the doctrine, and life, and temper of the apostle; more inclined to join in persecuting than to sympathize with them that are persecuted? Is it not amongst ourselves now true, that all who resolve to live godly in Christ Jesus suffer more or less of persecution?

These things prove that heresies in practice are current among professors of the orthodox faith. These things incline us to turn for our instruction from the fallible creeds of men, to the unerring word of God. Happy are they, who from childhood have known the holy Scriptures! Happy are they, who in this heavenly treasury of learning, have gained that wisdom which is "unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." This is the key which unlocks all difficulties, all that for our well being need to be unlocked. This is the sun that lightens all darkness, that warms all coldness of affection. This is the faithful monitor which at once teaches truth and exposes error, which brings sin to reproof, and instructs sinners in righteousness. This is the compass to which the minister resorts to keep him steady in his course and perfect in his reckoning; and to which each single voyager has access, for help toward his safe arrival.

Thanks be to God for this his precious gift, for this his holy inspiration! God grant that by this help we may be kept safe amidst the perils of the times, in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life!

St. Paul sheweth how to restrain false teachers.

1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, || make full proof of thy ministry.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me *only*, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

|| Or, *fulfil*.

§ 609. *The Christian triumphant in death.*

How fully is the time now come, when many among professing Christians will not endure sound doctrine! How manifestly is often now fulfilled this lively description, that "having itching ears" they "heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts!" How plainly in some instances have we seen these awful consequences, that they "turn away their ears from the truth," and are "turned unto fables!" No imposture seems too gross for their credulity. No false doctrine too monstrous for their endurance. They who will not put up with the truth of God, and object to the difficulty of a saving faith, choose eagerly the tenfold difficulties of error and unbelief, swallow greedily the baits of Satan, by which he takes them captive at his will. So closely are connected, in these deluded men, a taste for false doctrine, and a disposition to heap to themselves teachers! So often do the same minds spurn the wholesome authority of the true church, and implicitly submit to the dictation of a minister who has no appointment but their own!

And what now is the remedy which St. Paul proposes, or rather the measures which he enjoins on Timothy, for the prevention of these grievous enormities? Are we to profess, under the name of liberality, a careless indifference to the truth? Or are we to practise, under the colour of promoting conformity, the persecution of them that are in error? No. He charges his son Timothy, and through him all ministers to the end of time, he charges them in the most solemn manner, "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine." The two must be united. Sound doctrine and patient behaviour must go hand in hand. The excellency of what is taught must be enforced by the charity, by the temper, by the faithfulness, watchfulness, diligence and perseverance of the teacher. If he would banish error, he must preach the truth. If he would obviate irregularities, he must himself be ready, as each priest in our church has promised, "to use both public and private admonitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole," within his cure, "as need shall require, and occasion shall be given." (See the Ordering of Priests.) He must reprove, though it be tenderly. He must rebuke, though it be affectionately. He must watch in all things, at all hours, in all places, that he lose no opportunity of setting forward the salvation of the people committed to his charge. He must make full proof of his ministry; justifying, by his zeal, and faithfulness, and ability, by his steadiness, activity, and love, the divine commission with which he has been entrusted. This is the way, in which the duly appointed ministers of the church must meet the prevalent propensity of the people, to heap to themselves teachers, and to reject sound doctrine. They must not admit these things to be matters of indifference, nor treat those who do these things as guiltless; but at once convince them of sin by the faithful exposition of the truth, and win them by plain proofs of unaffected love to consider their ways, and amend their doings.

And see how cheering is the prospect which awaits these faithful labourers in the vineyard of their Lord! See how glorious a testimony St. Paul has left on record for the encouragement not of ministers alone, but of all who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" Eph. 6. 24. God grant that when the time of our departure is at hand, we may feel that we are "ready to be offered!" God grant, that when we have finished our course, we may be enabled to feel that we have fought the "good fight," and "have kept the faith!" God support us in that hour with the triumphant thought that henceforth there is laid up for us "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give" us "at that day!" God enable us to rejoice in the persuasion that this glory will be given not to us only, "but unto all them also that love his appearing!" Oh let us look for, and long for, and pray for the advent of our Lord! "Thy kingdom come," Matt. 6. 10, let us in earnest say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Rev. 22. 20. Thou hast been the chief of our delight on earth; oh be Thou soon our portion in heaven! Here it has been our purest joy to glorify thy name! Oh may we there soon join with saints and angels to sing the song of the Lamb for ever!

St. Paul sendeth messages and greetings.

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring *with thee*, and the books, *but* especially the parchments.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

15 Of whom he thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood || our words.

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not

be laid to their charge.

17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known; and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever Amen.

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

22 The Lord Jesus Christ *be* with thy spirit. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

|| Or, *our preachings.*

§ 610. *How we must use this world out of regard to the next.*

Though St. Paul was "now ready to be offered," though the severity of the persecution now raging was enough to give him the impression that the time of his departure was "at hand," ver. 6, he still took sufficient interest in "this present world," to send these various directions and greetings to Timothy. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." He was anxious for the presence of his friend. "Demas hath forsaken me." He was concerned for the falling away of a disciple. That Crescens was in Galatia, Titus in Dalmatia, and only Luke with him, that he wished for Mark to come, that he had sent away Tychicus, that he was in need of a certain cloak, and books, and parchments, how Alexander had withstood his words, how he had fared at his "first answer" when put upon his trial, whom he would have saluted, and who desired to greet Timothy, these things and others like them, he counted not unworthy of mention, at a time when he was writing his last words to Timothy, and daily expecting his summons to another world.

Hence it appears that as long as we are on the earth we ought to give due attention to earthly things. Whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we ought to do it with all our might. See Eccles. 2. 10. Only we must not love this present world. In this lies all the difference. This it was that led Demas to forsake the apostle in his troubles, and probably also to forsake his Lord. His affection was set on things below. Whereas St. Paul could write and think of earthly things with a heart still true to heaven. Thus when he bids Timothy bring Mark, he proves how thoroughly he had forgotten their former difference. When he adds, "for he is profitable to me for the ministry," he shews how uppermost in his mind was the success of the Gospel. The cloak and books he may have mentioned thus particularly, that he might be the less burdensome to his friends at Rome; seeing that in the most trifling matters there is no meanness in being careful to use what is our own, rather than to bring expense upon our brethren. Or it may be that he meant to use them as proofs that he was a citizen of Rome; teaching us not to court persecution, but to protect ourselves by all lawful means. If he mentioned the harm done to him by Alexander the coppersmith, this was in order to warn Timothy of his evil disposition, and at the same time to express the conformity of his own will to the will of God, in that matter so repugnant to flesh and blood, the punishment of the wicked in the day of the Lord. And if he noticed how at the judgment seat of men all forsook him, this was in order to pray for their forgiveness; this was in order to testify how God had strengthened him, how by him the Gospel had been then further made known; this was in order to declare his joyful conviction, that the same Lord who had delivered him from the lions of the earth, would save him from the cruel enemy of souls, and preserve him "unto his heavenly kingdom."

Let us then thus enter into our worldly business, and it will help instead of hindering us in our heavenly pilgrimage. To do good continually, to rejoice in the Lord always, to be always working the leaven of the Gospel into the lifeless mass of the world, these are the very ends for which we live in the world at all; these are things which may well engage our thoughts, up to the hour when we depart this life. We must glorify Christ on earth, if we would hope to share his glory in heaven. We must love those of whom we trust that they love Him, we must love all, for we are assured that He loves all; we must feel sympathy in their sorrows, and rejoice in their joys; if we hope to spend eternity in the love of one another. Nay, how can we expect that we shall then have perfect bliss, if we cannot bear to think, aye, and also attain to wish, what we know is God's will, and what we believe will then be fulfilled, in entire consistency with his love, that He will reward the wicked according to their works?

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TITUS. 1. 1—9.

St. Paul saluteth Titus ; sendeth instructions.

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness ;

2 || In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began ;

3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Saviour ;

4 To Titus mine own son after the common faith : Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are † wanting,

and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre ;

8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of ‡ good men, sober, just, holy, temperate ;

9 Holding fast the faithful word, ¶ as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

|| Or, For.

† Or, left undone.

1 1 Tim. 3. 3.

‡ Or, good things.

¶ Or, in teaching.

§ 611. Of bishops and elders.

In ancient times, the writer of a letter usually put his name at the beginning of it, as we now do commonly at the end. And St. Paul takes this opportunity of setting forth these titles of his, in which he chiefly gloried, "a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ." At the same time he declares in what way he served God, and what was the end of his being sent by Christ as his apostle. It was to establish "the faith of God's elect," of those whom God had chosen to be believers in his Son. It was for "the acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness;" for the testifying to those true doctrines, which alone produce holiness of life. It was in the hope of that crown of glory which God of old engaged Himself to give unto his people, but which has not been known of, at all times, or by all men ; God the Father having reserved the times and the seasons in his own power, see Acts 1. 7, and God the Son our Saviour having given his commandment at this time to the apostles, and having committed to them the office of manifesting his word through preaching. Let us thank God that to our ears this sound has reached, that to us this truth has been manifested. Let us pray, that as we have heard the things which God has revealed, we may attain to the eternal life which He has promised.

St. Paul's description of himself, in his letter, is not after the usual manner of such as write themselves the servants of those whom they address, but "the servant of God." And instead of a mere message of civility to Titus, he salutes his "own son after the common faith," with "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour." Let us endeavour to think of these things when we write to one another, when we wish for one another, when we pray for one another. Let us endeavour not only to think of them, but to write of them, to speak of them. What hinders, if we really believe them to be as excellent as they are, what hinders our desiring them as earnestly as we ought ? What hinders, if we earnestly desire them, what hinders our often thinking of them, wishing for them, and holding converse with each other about them ? What but our own sinfulness, our consciousness that our own lives are inconsistent with holiness of speech ? What but our apprehension that those with whom we converse have no taste for any such conversation ?

St. Paul had left Titus in Crete, for this cause, that he should set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as the apostle had appointed him. He appears to have had an authority delegated from the apostle to establish on a proper footing the whole Christian community throughout the island. The elders to be ordained seem to be the same who are in this same passage called bishops ; the names being applied indifferently to the same office. In which case they correspond with those whom we now call priests. Or it may be, that the qualifications of the two offices of elder and bishop, are here enumerated together, as being in so many respects the same. But whatever were the exact offices expressed by these two names, and in whatever degree they correspond to the ranks of ministers amongst ourselves, thus much we may do well to learn from the apostle's words, that ministers must be commissioned by such as have power so to do, and that they must be exemplary in their own lives and families, obedient to authority, as well as able to rule, irreproachable as being God's stewards, conquerors over the world, the flesh, and the devil, stedfast in the faith, and able both to defend and to enforce it.

God give unto his church ministers such as these in abundance ! God give unto his people grace to wait upon their ministry ! God help all, both ministers and people, to hold fast, as they have been taught, the faithful word, and to attain eternal life !

Testimony against the Cretians.

10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

12 One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians *are* alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them

sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

15 Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work || reprobate.

|| Or, void of judgment.

§ 612. *Unto the pure all things are pure.*

What an awful account is this given of the Cretians, by "one of themselves, even a prophet of their own:" "The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies!" Men whose god was their belly, see Phil. 3, 19, living in sloth and sensuality, like beasts of prey to each other in cruelty, and worse than wild beasts in being also false! And this testimony is confirmed by the apostle. "This witness is true." And no less true is it at this moment of great numbers of mankind, who are living like the Cretians of old, ignorant of the truth, and given up to all manner of iniquity. Oh how can we regard with so little of anxiety this degraded condition of our fellow creatures! How is it that we do so little, give so little, pray so little, for their improvement in all things needful unto happiness? What could be more delightful than to minister to their improvement? What sight can be more glorious than a Christian church growing up in the midst of a savage community? Such was the case in Crete at the time when St. Paul wrote to Titus. Such was the work in which Titus was engaged; implanting in these rude Cretians a love of truth instead of a taste for falsehood, gentleness instead of cruelty towards each other, and in themselves diligence, sobriety, temperance, and chastity. Such is the work which is now ready to our hands in almost every quarter of the globe; millions and millions of mankind, perishing for lack of that saving truth, which we in very many instances are neither ourselves thankful for, nor anxious to communicate to our brethren.

But when the good seed is well sown, will the field bear nothing but good fruit? or will there not be tares * among the wheat? some weeds such as were in the field before, and some also which would probably not have been there, unless the wheat had been sown? Even in a Christian community there are many who are unruly, many vain talkers, and deceivers, as were especially they of the circumcision in Crete; many who need faithful and able ministers to silence them, and who would else "subvert whole houses," bring whole families into spiritual ruin, teaching, for their own gain's sake, the very things which they ought to denounce. Such are the abuses which are cloaked under the cover of the Gospel. Such are the pernicious practices which creep in amongst professors of the truth, to their own injury, and to the scandal of the rest. "Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Such is the authority which St. Paul gave to Titus. Such is the treatment which he prescribed for the correction of the offenders. Such is the end for which alone he would allow any such correction. Let us note that in a church formed after the plan of the apostle, there must be a power to rebuke sharply. Let us learn to respect any such power which now exists in the church to which we belong. Let us help, by our submission and concurrence, by our good wishes, and above all by our prayers, to render it effectual for this important end, the making such as are in error "sound in the faith."

And here let us see how large and wide is the difference between being sound and unsound, holy and unholy, between being pure and being defiled. "To the pure all things are pure." They who are pure in heart, they whose hearts are fixed with singleness of affection upon God, and upon the doing of his will, may set at nought all such scruples as were suggested by "Jewish fables, and commandments of men." They are welcome to the enjoyment of all God's creatures upon earth, as far as they can enjoy them consistently with their supreme enjoyment of Himself. "But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure." To them therefore these traditional distinctions of the Jews, and the genuine commandments of God, were alike unprofitable. All things pollute them "whose mind and conscience is defiled." All things, even their pretended service unto God, defile them, who whilst they profess to know Him, are "unto every good work reprobate."

Certain things which become sound doctrine.

1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine :

2 That the aged men be || sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

3 The aged women likewise, that *they* be in behaviour as becometh † holiness, not ‡ false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things ;

4 That they may teach the young women to be ¶ sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be § sober minded.

7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works : in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned ; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

|| Or, vigilant.

† Or, holy women.

‡ Or, makebates.

¶ Or, wise.

§ Or, discreet.

* Or, gainsaying.

||| Or, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared.

9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things ; not * answering again ;

10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity ; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

11 For the grace of God ||| that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

§ 613. *The connexion of doctrine and practice.*

In what various and affecting points of view do the Scriptures continually press upon our attention the connexion between sound faith and holy practice ! “ The grace of God that bringeth salvation,” making provision for all men to be saved, “ hath appeared,” has been manifested, by the preaching of the Gospel. Hence we have been taught to deny ourselves in sin, to advance ourselves in holiness, and to watch for the coming of our Lord. He “ gave himself,” a sacrifice for our sins. But this was on purpose that “ he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And the things which become sound doctrine are these, that the aged men adorn their years with piety, the aged women with activity in the instruction of the young ; that the young men be sober minded ; that ministers be examples of the good works they have to preach ; that servants also avoid the faults to which they are most liable, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. Who can doubt then that it is God’s intent in revealing the forgiveness of sins, to make us watchful that we sin no more ? Who dare interpret his covenant of mercy, as if it did not bind us, by the most forcible of all ties, to be zealous of good works ?

No, let us study always how we may best fulfil God’s will, how we may most adorn Christ’s doctrine. Are we advanced in age ? Let us be sober, and temperate ; proving that we are now weaned from the enjoyments of a world which we so soon must leave. Let us be in our faith steadfast to the truth, in our charity and patience conformable to our faith. “ The aged women likewise,” let these avoid excess, control the tongue which longs to bear false witness, and employ themselves in teaching the young that holiness which they themselves have learnt to practise. Let young women be distinguished for their love of home, of their husbands, and of their children, for their sobriety, discretion, modesty, purity, and obedient disposition. Let servants who have learnt to love their Lord which is in heaven, be so much the more obedient unto their masters, which are on the earth, so much the more anxious to please them in all things lawful, so much the more watchful not to wrangle when found fault with, not to appropriate to themselves their masters’ goods, so much the more intent to manifest where their conduct can be seen, and also to exercise in secret before God, “ all good fidelity.” And let such as minister in things holy shew themselves to the rest “ a pattern of good works ;” especially in respect of doctrine that they maintain it pure, in point of manner that they be grave and serious, in point of speech that they be sincere, unaffected, unproveable ; and in point of authority that they so exhort and so rebuke as that no one shall despise them.

And let all, whether old or young, whether masters or servants, whether ministers or people, let all deny “ ungodliness and worldly lusts ;” let all “ live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ;” let all look for “ that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing” of that great One, who is “ God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Let us think of his great love in giving “ himself for us.” Let us lay to heart his object, “ that he might redeem us from all iniquity.” Let us promote his gracious design in our behalf, “ that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Are we thus zealous ? Are we thus unlike the world ? Are we distinguished not merely by our tenets, but by our practice ; not merely by some few outward observances, but by the whole tenour of our lives ? If so, we are adorning the doctrine of our Saviour. If not, we have reason to fear, that the more correctly we know his doctrine, and the more resolutely we profess it, we are but aggravating our sinfulness, and increasing our condemnation.

St. Paul further sheweth Titus what to teach.

1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and ||love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us † abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

8 *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have*

|| Or, *pity.*

† Gr. *richly.*

believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.

13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

14 And let our's also learn to ‡ maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

‡ Or, *profess honest trades.*

§ 614. *That we must be careful to maintain good works.*

The connexion between sound doctrine and holy practice is here further enforced. The sound doctrines insisted on are these, our own lost condition by nature, our salvation through Christ, "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" the abundant gift of the Spirit, the being justified freely, the being made heirs of heaven. Let us endeavour to be sensible of what we were by nature. Let us examine what we are now, and we shall probably find traces in abundance still remaining of folly, that worst of folly, the forgetting God, of disobedience against his will, of our being deceived by Satan, of our "serving divers lusts and pleasures," of our "living in malice and envy," of our being "hateful, and hating one another." And in this condition, in these evil tempers, we should have altogether lived, grown old, and died, had not God in his mercy called us to a Christian life: Oh how great is our gain, in any the least progress that we have made in turning from sin to holiness! Oh how infinitely great will be our joy, if ever through the tender mercy of our God we should be delivered from our remaining iniquities!

But let us examine further how far we are now delivered, how much has been done for us, how much in us. As far as God is concerned, all things needful have been done. His kindness and love have been made manifest. He has saved us, not indeed by works of ours, but of his own free mercy. He has put us into a state of salvation at our baptism, by a new birth, even by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Of this Holy Spirit God has shed on us the abundant gift, whereby we become holy as He is holy, and pure as He is pure. And by this means, we, having been justified by God's grace, are fitted to be partakers of the inheritance of heaven. These are true sayings. This is sound doctrine; genuine in itself, and also, wholesome for mankind. These things St. Paul would have constantly affirmed, about these things he would have us be frequent, and full, and firm in our profession of faith, in order "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

Lastly, therefore, whilst we insist on this only safe foundation, whilst we endeavour to lay it deep, and broad, and strong; let us be diligent to build upon it the building God delights in, a holy and religious life. To be submissive to lawful authority, to be active in doing good, to refrain from censure and from wrangling, to be meek, and to make manifest our meekness unto all men; these are but few of the many fruits of righteousness which must be nurtured by the root of faith. How great then would be our loss, how sensibly ought we to feel our danger, if we should be tempted to substitute for the truth of Christ the unprofitable devices of men! How carefully ought we to avoid the perilous communion of "a man that is an heretick," one who rejects the truth as revealed by God, and chooses his own religion for himself! Such an one is "condemned of himself," convicted by his own conscience, of self conceit and disobedience. Such an one, after due admonition and rebuke, ought to be rejected from the communion of the church. Most miserable case, to be cut off from friendly intercourse and spiritual fellowship with holy men on earth, and with saints in heaven! How much is it to be desired that some such punishment were now regarded with salutary fear, that some such wholesome discipline were now practised with merciful severity! Oh that whilst we refrain from punishing ourselves, God may send us, when needful for our good, such affliction as He sees fit! Oh that He may now chasten us in mercy for a season, and not give us up to destruction for ever!

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON.

St. Paul intercedeth with Philemon for Onesimus.

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,

2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 Whom I would have retained with me; that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the

bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; .

16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner, in Christ Jesus;

24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers.

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

§ 615. *How we ought to plead with one another for good.*

In this Epistle we see St. Paul entreating as a favour, that which he had authority to command as a duty: namely, that Philemon should receive back with kindness his runaway slave Onesimus, now converted to the faith of Christ. And thus also God Himself often condescends to persuade, and reason, and intercede with man for the obedience of the heart; when He has power to enforce it, if He so think fit. Ought we not hence to learn, that in our intercourse with each other, persuasion is to be preferred to force, gentleness to severity, entreaty to compulsion? Might we not hence do well to consider, how sensibly we ought to feel the condescension of our Lord, to whom we owe even our own selves, how heartily we ought to comply with his expressed wishes, without waiting for the injunction of his commands!

And now let us note how we might hence learn to intercede with each other, when we have a favour to obtain, especially if the thing be such as we desire out of regard to God's glory, and such as our brother out of regard to God's glory ought to give. First we may open our business with a Christian salutation, wishing at least in our hearts, and if occasion serve, saying earnestly with our lips, "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Next observe we must make mention in our private prayers of the brother Christian with whom we are about to intercede, giving thanks for such faith in Christ and love toward the saints as we hear of in him, and also praying that the more his faith is enlarged, he may the more freely ascribe all the good he does to the praise of the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord. Let these be our first approaches towards the hearts of our brethren, when we desire to engage them in any good work we have in hand. Let us thus lay the matter before the Lord. Let us thus entrust our cause to Him, in whose rule and governance are the hearts of all men. And then we are not only more likely to succeed, but whether we succeed or not, we shall delight in thinking that God's will is done.

And when we prefer our request to our brother, let us awaken if it be possible in his heart, the same affection which we feel glowing in our own. Onesimus had departed from his master. St. Paul had in the meantime converted him. St. Paul regarded him as a son in the Gospel, considered him to be now profitable

both to himself and to Philemon, as a witness to the force of truth, felt for his apprehensions, and rejoiced in the prospect of his being received with kindness. See then how he endeavours to communicate to Philemon the same Christian view of his servant's case. "Without thy mind I would do nothing." He would not retain Onesimus against Philemon's will. Nor would he send him back, except in the hope that Philemon wished him to return. "Perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever." He would have Philemon glad to have lost the services of Onesimus for a time, since in the interval he had been converted to be a Christian. "Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." He would not suppose that the difference between a master and a slave, in point of worldly advantages, could weigh in the mind of Philemon against the equality of their privileges as children of God. Both were partners with St. Paul. He would have one receive the other as a joint partaker of grace, a joint heir of heaven. Thus then let us also plead with each other for our brethren. Thus let us plead with those who profess faith in Christ, whether it be for the reconciliation of the estranged, for the instruction of the ignorant, for the alleviation of the sufferings of the poor, or for the propagating the Gospel among the heathen.

And whilst we plead with earnestness of affection, let us also plead with confidence of hope. It is the part of charity to hope all things. See 1 Cor. 13. 7. And knowing how far we are from that perfect love for our fellow creatures which ought to animate the hearts of all, we must not suffer ourselves to think that any good work we have in hand will be less interesting to our brethren than to ourselves. Let us have confidence in the compliance of our brethren. Let us have confidence in the success of their prayers. Let us pray for them as if we trusted that our own prayers would prevail. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." God grant that you may comply with our request, that you may forgive, or give, or help, or save, as freely, as largely, as graciously, as our Lord Jesus Christ has given Himself for you !

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE HEBREWS, 1. 1—14.

That God has spoken unto us by his Son.

1 God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 ¹ Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

6 And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of [†]righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

10 And, ²Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, ³Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

¹ Wisd. 7. 26.

[†] Gr. *rightness*, or, *straightness*.

² Ps. 102. 25. Is. 34. 4.

³ Ps. 110. 1. Matt. 22. 44.

§ 616. *That the Son is above angels, and therefore God.*

The chief objects of the apostle Paul in writing to the Hebrew Christians, appear to have been these, to confirm them in the faith of Christ, and to furnish them with arguments suited for their use in convincing their unbelieving brethren. And accordingly we find in this Epistle, frequent reference to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which the Jews received as the word of God; and frequent use of that kind of argument to which the Jews were most likely to give heed, that which is founded on words, and names, and expressions, occurring in Holy Writ. Hence we may learn what would now be our best method of attempting the conversion of the Jews; namely, to argue from what they allow for truth, and in the manner which they feel to be convincing. And hence we may also take occasion to observe, that it is now our duty to be diligent to help in the work of converting them. For in our Lord's command that we should baptize all nations, who can imagine that the Jews are excepted? Did not St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, address himself in every city first to the Jews? Even after he had been compelled, by their opposition at Antioch in Pisidia, to say, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles," did he not at the very next city which he visited, Iconium, enter straightway into the synagogue of the Jews? See Acts 13. 46, 51; 14. 1. Can we wonder that we share so little of his success, when we fall so far short of his example? Can we doubt that this is one chief use for which this very Epistle has been preserved in Scripture, that it may serve Christians as a storehouse of affecting arguments for the conversion of unbelieving Jews? Oh that they in whose place we Gentiles were grafted in, may soon again bear fruit on their own proper stock! Oh that they whose casting away has been our reconciliation, may soon again be received, and be as life from the dead! See Rom. 11. 12—18.

See then how profitably, for them, and for us also, St. Paul establishes the certainty of the things we have believed! If "faith cometh by hearing;" Rom. 10. 17; if men have been used to believe when God spake unto them aforetime by the prophets, how much more must they give ear when He speaks unto them by his Son! This is the first argument here insisted on for the truth of God's message in the Gospel, the dignity of the Messenger. This is an argument which shews not only that the Gospel is true, but that it supersedes all other revelations; and therefore might be admitted by the Jew, consistently with his reverence for the Law and the Prophets. For God has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, the very Son "whom he hath appointed heir of all things," and who designs to share this glory with his saints, the very Son "by whom also he made the worlds," and who will remain when the worlds shall perish. And this Son is no less than the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" partaking of the Father's Godhead, even as a Son on earth is of the same nature and order as his earthly father. He upholds, or

preserves what He created and made. He "by himself purged our sins," made atonement by virtue of his own spotless worth for all the sins of all mankind. And having done this, He is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" being not only far above all God's former prophets who were men, but also above all his messengers that were angels.

This last point is here insisted on at considerable length. For the Jews were sure to call to mind, that in their dispensation they had enjoyed not only the word of prophecy, but the ministry of angels. And as it is well understood that angels stand next in greatness and in glory unto God, there was no more fitting way to lead up our thoughts to the surprising mystery that Christ is God, than to prove that He is as "much better than the angels," as the name of Son imports.

This then is proved first by his name of Son, a name given Him more than once in prophecies here quoted from the Old Testament, a name not merely given Him in the way of adoption, but his "by inheritance," because He is the Son. Again, the angels are bidden to "worship him." Again, the angels are God's ministers or servants, employed like winds or lightnings to do his pleasure, at the word of his command. And it is in the capacity of servants, "sent forth" under orders, that they "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." "But unto the Son" it is said in the word of prophecy, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" and "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth;" and "Sit on my right hand;" expressions these, not as of confidence in a servant, but as of glorying in a Son.

Thanks then be to God the Father, that He has spoken unto us by his Son! Thanks be to God the Son, that He has not only lived to reveal to us the Father's will, but also reconciled us to the Father by his death! Thanks be to God the Holy Ghost, that He has moved both prophets and apostles, both in the Old Testament and in the New, to testify to the glory, majesty, and dominion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

That we must give heed to what has been spoken by the Son.

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should † let them slip.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and || gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

† Gr. run out as leaking vessels.

|| Or, distributions.

6 But one in a certain place testified saying, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7 Thou madest him * a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels ‡ for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

1 Ps. 8. 4.

* Or, a little while inferior to.

‡ Or, by.

§ 617. *The peril of neglecting so great salvation.*

The dignity of the Messenger has been set forth as a proof that the message is true. It is more; for it is a motive which ought to have great weight with all who hear the message, lest they let slip what they once have heard. For even the Law which was "ordained by angels," Gal. 3. 19, revealed through their ministry, is sanctioned by the enactment of sure retribution for "every transgression and disobedience." How much more, when God has spoken by his Son, how much more shall we suffer, if we dare to disobey! Nay, how shall we escape, if we so much as neglect to hear, if we are careless and inattentive to this great salvation, which Christ the Son first revealed, which was next confirmed "by them that heard him," and to which God also Himself all along bare witness, by the miracles, of which so many striking instances are set down in the New Testament? How shall we escape? What earnest heed must we continually give, unless we would for ever perish!

For that Christ the Messenger of our covenant, is indeed greater than the angels, is here further proved by this striking consideration, that He is the Lord or Ruler in the kingdom of heaven, that "world to come, whereof we speak," that state of things to which all prophecy refers as its end and object, that heaven begun on earth which the Jews were wont to look for, that church and all its members, and all their glory and their joy, for the sake of which God thought it not too much to yield up his own Son a sacrifice for sin, for the sake of which Christ "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philip. 2. 8. Now there is no hint in the Old Testament of God's having put this "world to come" in subjection unto the angels. Whereas there is a passage in the Psalms plainly pointing to the Messiah, which speaks first of his being made "a little lower than the angels," and then of his being "crowned with glory and honour," and being set over all the works of God's hand. So that all things are to be put in subjection under Christ. And though "we see not yet all things put under him," though we have seen Him chiefly in his state of humiliation, this was in order that "he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." And therefore in this we already see proof that He is "crowned with glory and honour." For the part of this prophecy which we see fulfilled is an earnest of the fulfilment of the whole, to assure us that He is the Lord of those whom He has redeemed, and so much higher than the angels as He is the destroyer of death, the conqueror of Satan, the Saviour of sinners, the King of saints.

Let us take heed then and consider how fearful is our risk, or rather how sure is our destruction, if we neglect so great salvation. Let us note that not they only will be lost who presumptuously disobey, but also they who carelessly let slip what they have heard. Yes, if we have but once heard the Gospel, if but once the truth have sounded in our ears, if but once the glad tidings of mercy, as revealed by the Son of God Himself, have been told us by any one of all whom He has redeemed, we are straightway bound to hold fast the truth, we are straightway bound to believe and to obey. But what if we have been told over and over again? What if we have heard from our youth upwards? What if we hear each Lord's day in the church? What if we read each day of our lives in the Gospel? Then if we be negligent, then if we be not fervent in spirit serving the Lord, then if we be not devout towards God, affectionate to each other, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, covetous of treasure in heaven, and careful for no one thing on earth except the one thing needful; surely for us in vain Christ died, his death will only lead to our greater condemnation; for against such it is recorded of the householder, who thought that the husbandmen would reverence his son, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men." Matt. 21. 41.

Why the Son took on him the nature of man.

10 For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

13 And again, ¹ I will put my trust in him. And again, ² Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of

flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily † he took not on *him* the nature of angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

¹ Ps. 118. 2.

² Is. 8. 18.

† Gr. he taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold.

§ 618. *Christ a merciful and faithful High Priest.*

Whilst our Lord was yet alive, the Jews were used to object, "Howbeit we know this man whence he is." John 7. 27. And in like manner when they stoned Him, they "answered him saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy;" and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." John 10. 33. This is the sort of objection to which the apostle in this passage would supply an answer. For this is the kind of difficulty with which the Hebrews were likely to be perplexed: we have seen no glory such as became a prophet or an angel, much less such as is suitable to the Son of God. But let us here first observe, that the humiliation of the Messiah is spoken of in the same word of prophecy which describes his glory. See ver. 7. And next let us consider the necessity of the case: "both he that sanctifieth" by expiating sin, "and they who are sanctified," whose sins are expiated, "are all of one," must needs be of one nature. Christ must needs become man, in order to atone for man's sin. And therefore He is not ashamed to call us by the names of "brethren" or of "children;" each of which implies a common nature. And this is the reason which made it fitting, or perhaps necessary, that Christ should be made "perfect through sufferings;" because it is only by suffering that our defiled nature could be purified and made meet for glory. So that if Christ must needs take on Him our nature in order to atone for our sins, He must also needs undergo sufferings in the flesh, in order for us to be brought as sons of God unto glory. We being "partakers of flesh and blood," He partook of them also. We being sentenced to death for sin, He also submitted to die, on purpose that by dying He might overcome and "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" and on purpose that He might "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." For this is that which makes all things on earth "vanity of vanities." Eccles. 1. 2. It was when the fear of death was fallen upon him, that the Psalmist thus expressed his terror, "Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me." Ps. 55. 4, 5. But to know that our Redeemer liveth, this breaks the bonds of our captivity. To be assured that One who was of the seed of the woman, One who truly died, did no less truly rise again from the dead, this delivers us from the fear of death, if we believe that for us He died, for us He rose again, if we have grace to rise again with Him unto newness of life.

These then are sufficient reasons for Christ's taking upon Him not the nature of angels, but "the seed of Abraham." But besides these there is one other here insisted on, that his experience of our sufferings, especially in temptation, made Him more fit for an office, which the Jews knew that Messiah must hold, that of a "high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." For in this his office He was more sure to be "merciful and faithful," or at least we have more assurance that He is likely so to be, from his having Himself "suffered being tempted;" it being generally admitted that those who have had experience in trouble are both more able and more willing to succour the afflicted. Thus not only are we actually saved by Christ, through his taking on Him the nature of man, but we have also the more comfortable assurance of salvation. We are led to look upon Him as One who has a feeling for our infirmities. We are led to feel in each suffering we endure, All this and more than this didst Thou, O Lord, undergo for me! All this and more than this, Thou wilt enable me to undergo for Thee! Not only hast Thou once died for my sins; Thou ever livest to make intercession for me. Not only has God for thy sake forgiven me once for all the past; Thou art still pleading for mercy whilst I still transgress. When I fall, Thou liftest me up. When I stand, Thou holdest me upright. Thou teachest me to pray that I be not led into temptation. Thou canst teach me also to count it all joy when God has permitted me to be tempted! Thou makest me in all things more than conqueror! Thou gettest me in all things grace to glorify thy name! Glory be to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

That Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses.

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

2 Who was faithful to him that † appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end:

7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, 'To day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation,

and said, They do alway err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

11 So I swear in my wrath, † They shall not enter into my rest.)

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

† Gr. made, 1 Sam. 12. 6.

† Ps. 95. 7.

† Gr. if they shall enter.

§. 619. *That we by unbelief and sin lose heaven.*

St. Paul here presses the Jews to consider that Jesus was not only faithful in his office of revealing the will of God, even as Moses was; but also that "He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses." For Moses was but one member of that household the church, of which Christ was the builder and maker. For even as God, "that built all things," is therefore greater than all, so Christ by whom all things were made, see ch. 1. 2, and who is the head over all things to the church, see Eph. 1. 22, is to be esteemed far above every one of his own saints. And further, Moses, however "faithful in all his house," in all this dispensation intrusted to him, was faithful as a servant; and, as a witness, in all that he revealed and did, to a prophet who should rise up after him, to whom his people ought to hearken. See Deut. 18. 15. Whereas Christ was faithful "as a son over his own house," having the interest and authority of an only begotten Son in all that belongs to his Father, who has appointed Him to be "heir of all things." Ch. 1. 2. Oh how thankful must we be to think that we are his house, his servants, his brethren, his children! Oh how earnestly must we endeavour, in order to secure the continuance of our privileges, to hold fast our confidence and joy of hope "firm unto the end!"

For see how fearfully the Holy Spirit warned those who were disciples of Moses, not to harden their hearts, as their fathers did, not to tempt God, as their fathers did in the wilderness, when they had seen his marvels for forty years together! Note how solemnly God is said to have sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest! Now "with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" So that although they came out of Egypt by Moses, they were notwithstanding guilty afterwards of sin. And they sinned because they believed not. And because of their unbelief they were not allowed to enter into the land of Canaan.

We too have been brought out of spiritual Egypt, out of the bondage of sin and death. We are on our way, under the guidance of our Saviour, unto the rest of holiness and heaven. We are passing through this world as through a wilderness. We are directed by a light from heaven, the word of truth. We are clothed with garments that wax not old, the graces of the Gospel. We have the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. We are fed with more than angels' food, even eating of bread from heaven, our Saviour's flesh, and drinking of the rock which follows us, which is Christ. Before us is the land of promise, the crown of glory, rest so entire, joy so excellent, that all that we can have on earth compared with heaven is but as a wandering in the wilderness. Heaven awaits us at the end. And yet it may be that we shall never enter in. "To day if ye will hear his voice," for now is our time of trial, "harden not your hearts," else we shall perish in our sins. Let us then "exhort one another daily, while it is called To day." Let us suffer no day to pass without saying to one or more of our brethren words to some such effect as these: How great has been our gain in being called to heaven, how sad will be our loss, "if we come short of it," how deceitful is sin in hardening the heart, how closely need we watch against an evil heart of unbelief, how great is our risk lest we depart from the living God, how sure is our enjoyment of the glory of our Lord, if we hold fast the faith and hope we have begun with, stedfast unto the end!

That there remaineth a rest for the people of God.

1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but * the word preached did not profit them, || not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, "they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

* Gr. the word of hearing.

|| Or, because they were not united by faith to.

¶ Or, keeping of a sabbath.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom † it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

7 (Again he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if ‡ Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a ¶ rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his.)

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of ** unbelief.

† Or, the gospel was first preached.

¶ Or, disobedience.

‡ That is, Joshua.

§ 620. *That we must labour not to come short of our promised rest.*

Christians are to reckon that they have a promise of entering into the rest of God. Now this "gospel," or word of promise, is implied in the word of threatening, sanctioned by an oath, that unbelievers should not enter into rest. For hence it is to be inferred that believers shall. And therefore though the promise "did not profit them" which first heard it, by reason of their not believing it in their hearts, yet "we which have believed do enter into rest," those of us who have faith in God's promise, are sure to enter into the enjoyment of a rest like his. Of this rest we have not only a promise in God's word, but also a type or significant figure in his resting on the Sabbath day from his work of creation. For this is the way in which Scripture speaks of the Sabbath, "God did rest on the seventh day from all his works;" and again, "If they shall enter into my rest." And this is one reason amongst many, why God commanded man, from the beginning of the world, to keep holy one day in seven, that we might as often as that day comes round, be forcibly reminded, how soon our work on earth must end, and be actually moved to set our hearts on the rest which is to come.

Now we cannot think that God's promises will have no fulfilment, or that the types which He has set forth in his word will not be realized in what befalls his creatures. Some must enter into his rest. "They to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." They to whom the land of Canaan, another type of heaven, was first promised, were cut off for their sins in the wilderness. And yet, long afterwards, the promise was repeated by the mouth of David, and the promise again set forth against hardness of heart. So that something more must have been meant than the rest given by Joshua, who bare the name and was the type of Jesus, when he settled the Israelites in Canaan. And there must be a rest still remaining, to the people of God, to be enjoyed by believers in Christ, when they shall have ceased from their labours of love upon earth, and shall have entered into that heavenly country where "their works do follow them." Rev. 14. 13. Christians then have a promise of rest as well as Jews. We have our Sabbath upon earth, as a pledge to assure us of rest in heaven, as a help to prepare us for enjoying it. And though our day of rest be not the same in order of the seven, as that which the Jews observed after their deliverance out of Egypt, it is very probably the same which God at the first ordained; it is certainly that same day of the week on which Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, who has now "entered into his rest," "ceased from his own works," of our redemption and salvation, by rising from the dead.

Let us then fear lest we "come short" of this promise. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." We know how grievous a thing it is to miss by our own fault any great gain or pleasure or honour which we might else have had. We feel often how much more we are put to pain by losing what has once been ours, than by not having what we never have possessed. Now this is the light in which the apostle here represents the rest of God, the happiness of heaven. It is ours. It is secured to us by promise. We have it as sure as God's word, we have it for our own. If we lose it, we lose what has been once ours. If we come short of it, we miss what we might have certainly possessed. But then it is also possible that we may come short of it. The same God who promises, also warns. He warns us by the "example of unbelief," He points out to us what once has happened to unbelievers. The same God who promises, also commands. He bids us labour, if we would enter into his rest. His word is indeed sure. But on us depends which way it will be fulfilled. His glory cannot fail of being made manifest. But this will be, according to our faith and love, either by our entering into his rest, or by our being consumed by the breath of his displeasure.

O God, who hast set before us a choice so weighty, help us to choose according to thy will! O God, who willest not the death of a sinner, help us to be converted and live! O God, who on the seventh day didst rest from all thy works, help us to enjoy thy Sabbaths upon earth, as an earnest of our felicity in heaven!

God's word. His knowing all things. The sympathy of Christ.

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest,

that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

§ 621. *Motives to our perseverance in labour and in prayer.*

Here are three several motives, urged upon our attention, to prevail with us that we labour to attain the rest of God, and ask with confidence of faith for his help in our undertaking. First we are to consider the power of the word of God, that word which was delivered to the fathers by the prophets, and spoken to us in these last days by God's own Son. Besides the dignity of the Messenger, we must weigh well the importance of the message. We must examine all the books of Holy Scripture, study them one by one, and all together, watch their effect upon us as we read, or hear, pray for help to understand them aright, and to apply them in the practice of our lives. Then we shall find how the word of God is quick, that is to say, alive, lively, and capable of giving life; how it is powerful, even as St. Paul has elsewhere described the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation," Rom. 1. 16; how it is "sharper than any two edged sword," being indeed "the sword of the Spirit," Eph. 6. 17, being that by which the Jews who heard Peter and the other apostles, "were pricked in their heart," Acts 2. 37, and were "cut to the heart," Acts 5. 33. To little purpose have we ourselves read or heard that holy book, the Bible, if we have not felt the sharpness of this twofold edge, if we have not found that even as a sword divides "joints and marrow," and both from "soul and spirit," so the Scriptures pierce the inmost recesses of our thoughts, divide asunder the false pleas and vain excuses, by which we seek to excuse ourselves in sin, and make manifest to ourselves, what is else a secret unto us, the sinfulness of our own nature. Oh let us then acknowledge in these effects the power of the Almighty. Let us receive this word as his. Let us feel that it is God speaking to our souls. Let us give heed. Let us believe. Let us obey.

For in the second place, as is his word, so is He Himself, "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We know it to be his word because it is able to do this. Much more then is He able. Much more may we be sure that no one of all the beings whom He has made can fail to be manifest in his sight; yea that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" to whom we have to give account. This is a thought of great weight to keep us on the watch that we fall not into secret unbelief. For many alas, who are esteemed to be believers, are conscious to themselves that they have no faith at all. And many without being themselves aware of it, are in reality little better than unbelievers. They attend all Christian ordinances. They comply with all Christian usages. But they are living all the while without God in the world, without hope in Christ, without desire or endeavour to enter into the rest of heaven. They never lift up their hearts to God in secret prayer. They never look upon Him as the Father reconciled, as the Redeemer who died to deliver them, as the Holy Spirit who strives within their hearts to make them holy. They never speak or think or act, as if heaven were more desirable than earth, and holiness than sin; as if Christ were their pattern in living, or as if it were their gain to die. But behold, for a warning unto all such it is written, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4. 24. The heart is what He looks to. The soul is what He sees. The prayers to which He listens are what we feel whilst we are praying. The faith which He counts unto us for righteousness is that which works in us a desire to be righteous.

In the third place let us observe how greatly we are encouraged thus to believe, thus to feel, thus to pray, by the view here given us of our Lord as our "great high priest." He "is passed into the heavens," it is true; and yet He looks down with interest on his servants that are upon the earth. He is "the Son of God," we own with reverence; and yet He condescended to be also the Son of man. And having by this means been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." * He is such an one as can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Let us therefore ask for help to holiness as if we felt sure that we should have it given us, through his prevailing intercession. Let us seek for rest in heaven, as if we were confident of obtaining it, through Him, who is gone before to prepare a place for us. See John 14. 2. And may God grant that we neither so presume upon his help ourselves as to cease from labouring, nor so trust in our own exertions, as to fall short of his promises through unbelief.

Christ appointed to be our High Priest for ever.

1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

2 Who *||* can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

6 As he saith also in another *place*, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death,

and was heard *†* in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

13 For every one that useth milk *‡* is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are ** of* full age, *even* those who by reason *§* of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

|| Or, can reasonably bear with. *†* Or, for his piety. *‡* Gr. hath no experience. *** Or, perfect. *§* Or, of an habit, or, perfection.

§ 622. *That Christians have both a Priest and a Sacrifice.*

A priest is one who offers sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. And judging both from what we know of ancient times, and from what we meet with in many parts of the world at present, it is probable that the institution of a priesthood was as early as that of sacrifices; and that both came from the same appointment, that of God. For in these things even the corrupted religion of idolaters serves to indicate what the truth was before it was corrupted. Now the Jews, we know, had their priests expressly appointed to them by the law of Moses. And they were therefore sure to feel it as an objection to the Gospel, and to the religion which the apostles were establishing, that therein there were no sacrifices to be offered, no priests appointed to offer them. And this is an objection not unlikely to occur now amongst the heathen, who from long established usage are often warmly attached to their own superstitious rites, and who in this instance, are partly right in the notion which they have preserved throughout all their generations, that in all true religion there must be a sacrifice and a priest.

But to such objectors we may reply, we have a priest, we have a sacrifice. We have a High Priest, "taken from among men," One who partakes of our own nature, One who is appointed in man's behalf to offer "gifts and sacrifices for sins;" One who has sympathy for our sufferings, and has experienced the force of our temptations; One who, unlike all other priests, being Himself without sin, is above all others in this, that He needs not to offer for Himself; One who took not this honour on Himself, but was set apart by the voice of God, in prophecy. One who is once for all an High Priest for ever, so that his people need no other Priest, nor other Sacrifice. For He who was the Priest, was also the Sacrifice. Yea, he offered up Himself as an atonement for our sins. He took upon Him our flesh, that He might shed his blood in our behalf. And "in the days of his flesh," He was made perfect through sufferings, being a Lamb without spot; yea, "though he were a Son," yet He learned this new kind of obedience "by the things which he suffered," obedience unto death. And though He prayed earnestly in his agony, and "was heard in that he feared," God sending unto Him an angel to strengthen Him, see Luke 22. 43, yet the cup did not pass from Him. He declared of his own sacrifice, "It is finished;" and when He had cried with a loud voice He "gave up the ghost." John 19. 30. Thus did He become "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Thus was He, as described in God's word, "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing." Yes, it is man's dullness, which makes God's word difficult to be understood. We are slow in understanding it. We are averse to understand it. The things of God are to our natural minds foolishness. Our natural hearts are at enmity with what God has revealed. And even when we are by grace regenerate, when we have been born again, of water and of the Spirit, see John 3. 5, we are at first but in the condition of a babe. Nay as long as we can digest only the first elements of Christian knowledge, we remain in spiritual infancy, "unskilful in the word of righteousness." Oh that we may so diligently use the gifts we have, as to attain unto the use of more and more! Oh that we may so exercise our spiritual senses, in discerning good from evil, as to be fit to feed on "strong meat," that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may know all that God has revealed, that our "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment!" Phil. 1. 9.

That we must not fall away, but go on to perfection.

1 Therefore leaving || the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son

of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them † by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

|| Or, the word of the beginning of Christ.

† Or, for.

§ 623. *Progressive improvement in knowledge and in love.*

The Gospel has its mysteries; but they are mysteries revealed. It has its degrees of knowledge; but the very highest are all open to the lowliest of mankind. All are invited to "go on unto perfection;" both in knowledge and in practice; to press on to those things which are before, both in the understanding of what God's will is, and in attaining unto the grace to do it. And therefore, though the Hebrews might need to be again taught "the first principles of the oracles of God," ch. 5. 12, yet St. Paul, considering that "for the time" they ought to have been teachers, would not lay anew in this Epistle the foundation of Christian teaching, would not write to them elementary instructions on repentance and faith, on baptism and laying on of hands, on the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. But he resolved, with God's permission, to lead them on to the consideration of those matters "hard to be uttered," ch. 5. 11, which were so by reason of their dulness and inattention. Let us then arouse all our faculties to the study of things heavenly. Let us stimulate our thirst after heavenly knowledge. Let us drink at the fountain of divine truth. And we shall then be able to say heartily with the Psalmist, "Through thy commandments I get understanding: therefore I hate all evil ways." Ps. 119. 104.

But what, if instead of going on unto perfection, we fall away into perdition? What, if after we have had the right foundation laid, we tear it up from the ground, and root it out? What if they who have been "once enlightened" by the truth, once "tasted of the heavenly gift" of grace, once been made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," in baptism and the laying on of hands, "and have tasted the good word of God," so as to know how good it is, "and the powers of the world to come," so as to experience how animating is the hope of it; What if these fall away? What if these renounce the profession of religion, or deny the excellency of godliness? What if these become declared apostates from the faith, or secret enemies to the Gospel? Is it not easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than "to renew them again unto repentance?" Yes, this is one of the things which with man is "impossible." It is one of the things which, though possible, are not probable with God. For what is this but for the ground to drink in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and yet to yield no better fruit than thorns and briers, and so to deserve no better sentence than a curse, no better end than to be burnt? Oh stubborn and unkindly hearts, that can receive the precious showers of God's mercy in the Gospel, and bear, instead of holiness and joy, only the thorns of unbelief, the briers of iniquity! Oh cruel and unthankful souls, which can know of Christ's love in dying for sinners, the scorn which He encountered, the pain which He endured, and yet "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame!"

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." The terrors of the Lord are not concealed by the apostle. But he greatly prefers to use the consolations of Christ. And whilst he tells us of the end of the ungodly, "to be burned," he sets forth for our encouragement the blessing promised to that kindly soil, which in return for heaven's oft repeated rain, brings forth herbs meet for the husbandman's use; he assures those, who on the foundation of a right faith, have built the work and labour of love, that God is not unrighteous to forget what they have done. Let us then at once go on in knowledge, and also grow in charity. Whilst we are studious to understand the love of God, let us be active in loving one another. Whilst we meditate deeply, let us also labour diligently. Thus our knowledge seasoned with charity will not puff up. Thus our charity enlightened and enlarged by knowledge will edify the more. See 1 Cor. 8. 1.

God's promises confirmed by oath.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

14 Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an

oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, || confirmed *it* by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

* 19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

|| Gr. *interposed himself by an oath.*

§ 624. *The security of hoping in God's promises.*

When we consider whom we mean by the name of God, One who made all things, One who preserves all things, we are lost in the endeavour to comprehend the greatness of his power. When we remember how He has condescended to reveal Himself to mankind, how He has accommodated his language to our thoughts and feelings, to our habits and practices, we are no less at a loss to express the graciousness of his love. Between man and man a promise is that which gives us hope of receiving. Accordingly, God also has made most precious promises, that we may have confident assurance of possessing his inestimable gifts. An oath, in the way of confirming an assertion, is amongst men the "end of all strife." Accordingly God also has made oath, in order "more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel," in order to satisfy them more thoroughly that his purpose to give them holiness and heaven can never change. And as men, when they take oath, swear by some one greater than themselves, by way of sanction to the truth of what they swear to; so God, "because he could swear by no greater," "swore by himself." This He did in his promise to Abraham, that promise which is to us and to our children after us, if we be children of Abraham's faith. And thus we have "two immutable things," things which cannot change, God's promise and God's oath, to afford us in all present trouble "strong consolation," by assuring us of everlasting joy hereafter.

Now this promise, this oath, and the assurance of hope which is built upon these two immutable things, are most exactly suited for our support in our state of discipline and trial; wherein we have scarce one moment present at a time, and wherein the chief part of our peace and joy depends on what we are expecting for the future. For see how in the present life we rely upon the promises of each other. Observe how the satisfactions of each passing hour depend upon our conviction that the many parties who are members of our society will faithfully keep their several engagements. What would be our confusion and dismay, if all at once the labourer were to cease from working as agreed upon, the artificer to stop short in his undertaking, and the tradesman to refuse to deal; were domestic servants to withhold their stipulated help, were friends to violate their friendship, were brethren and sisters to prove false, parents to forget their duty to their children, and children what they owe to their parents, were husbands and wives to break their plighted faith, and to suppress their accustomed love? These things and such as these, were they to happen altogether, would destroy all present comfort, by overthrowing all prospect of future peace. These things in proportion as they now happen one by one, these disappointments of our hope, these failures of the help we had relied upon, are amongst the most bitter of those numerous afflictions, which render our days on earth evil as well as few.

But in the midst of the fickleness and the falsehood of man, our thoughts may rest without risk of disappointment on the truth of the promises of God. Whilst we flee for refuge from the treachery of false brethren, we may lay hold with certainty upon the covenant set before us in the Gospel. Whilst we are tossed to and fro, and nigh to shipwreck of our happiness, in the eddies and cross currents of man's variable temper, we may make fast our souls to the love of God, and to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, as to an anchor which will never fail. For the present we shall be safe, though in the midst of danger; in the midst of waves and winds, and yet secure. For the future we shall be brought into the haven of eternity, those realms of joy where Christ already is. He as our forerunner "is for us entered." Let us follow in his steps, and we shall attain unto his presence. Let us be "not slothful" but diligent, not doubtful but confident in hope; and we shall then be numbered among them "who through faith and patience inherit the promises" of God.

Melchisedec the type of Christ.

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

|| Gr, without pedigree.

† Or, pedigree.

§ 625. *Jesus our Priest and King.*

On the mention of Jesus, at the end of the last chapter, St. Paul referred to what he had said of Him before, by adding to his name these words, "made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Ch. 6. 20. This was the very thing wherof he had many words to say that were "hard to be uttered," ch. 5. 11, and which words he now proceeds to write, having in the meantime endeavoured to awaken the attention of his readers. And this was one of the matters, which, as he afterwards observes, God had asserted with the solemnity of an oath. See Ver. 21.

Let us then attentively observe what is here told us of Melchisedec; how it is shewn that he was a type of our Saviour Christ; how Christ is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec; and how this his priesthood has been ordained of God for our great and lasting benefit.

Melchisedec was king of Salem. Jesus was "King of the Jews;" and was proclaimed as such in the same city, Jerusalem. John 19. 19. Melchisedec was "priest of the most High God," for there were priests of the true God and prophets of the true God, before the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, even from the beginning of the world. Jesus is our great High Priest. The name Melchisedec means "King of righteousness." "King of Salem" means "King of peace." Jesus is "the Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23. 6, Jesus is the "Prince of peace." Is. 9. 6. The genealogy of Melchisedec is not recorded. And his priesthood coming by inheritance with his sceptre, was not limited like the priesthood of the family of Aaron between the ages of thirty years and fifty. Jesus was from eternity to eternity. And of the Messiah it had been prophesied: "Who shall declare his generation?" Is. 53. 8.

But it follows, if He were a priest after the order of Melchisedec, that He must be of more honour than the priests which were of Abraham's family. For these receive tithes of their brethren. But Melchisedec received tithes of Abraham. And in him, to use an argument of weight in such a question of precedency, in Abraham he received tithes of Levi and his descendants. And again, Melchisedec blessed Abraham, which is another instance of superiority. And of Melchisedec "it is witnessed that he liveth," shewing that the Priest which is of his order never dies. And if the Levitical priesthood were, as the Jews imagined, the end and not the type, how came it to be prophesied that another Priest should arise of another order not named from Aaron? Yet there must needs be in this a change of the law of the priesthood; since the Messiah, to whom it is agreed that this prophecy refers, was to be of another tribe, the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood," and of which tribe no man in point of fact had been used to give "attendance at the altar."

Here then was ample evidence to the Hebrew Christians, that by owning Jesus for the Christ they would not be without the benefit of a great High Priest. Here is comfortable assurance for us all, that we have a Priest, who is also a King; a "King of righteousness," a "King of peace," a King and Priest eternal in the heavens, even no other than "the Son of God." Do we need atonement? He has made it. Intercession? He is making it continually. Do we need guidance and government? He rules over all. He makes all things work together for our good. He provides for our wants. He cares for our afflictions. In our failings He watches to strengthen us. In our victory He delights to honour us. Who would not be the subjects of a King so gracious? Who would not be the people of so heavenly a Priest?

The superiority of Christ's priesthood further proved.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, || but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

21 (For those priests were made † without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, 'The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

|| Or, but it was the bringing in. † Or, without swearing of an oath.

¶ Or, evermore.

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath † an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them ¶ to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

* 26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is § consecrated for evermore.

† Ps. 110. 4.

‡ Or, which passeth not from one to another.

§ Gr. perfected.

§ 626. *Our advantage in having such an High Priest as Christ.*

That the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron is here made "yet far more evident;" by this reason, that He is made a Priest "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." And this is hinted at in the words of prophecy: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Ps. 110. 4. Which words, and the whole Psalm taken together, refer to a new order of things, to the disannulling of the law of Moses, and to "the bringing in of a better hope." "For the law made nothing perfect." It was unprofitable and "weak through the flesh." Rom. 8. 3. And it is therefore called "a carnal commandment," because it depended on the flesh for its efficiency. Whereas the Gospel is "the power of an endless life." For by it "we draw nigh unto God;" we, Gentiles as well as Jews, have access unto the Father by the Spirit. See Eph. 2. 18. And this the Hebrews must allow to have been foretold of the Messiah and of his priesthood; if at least they referred to the Messiah this promise of a priest that should arise after another order, and the many striking descriptions which the prophets had set down of a new and spiritual dispensation.

Add to this, that the priesthood of Christ is ordained of God with the solemnity of an oath: "The Lord sware and will not repent." And this shews us what regard God had to it, how largely He honours it, how deeply He would have us reverence it, how highly He exalts it above the priesthood of those who were made priests without an oath. For "by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." The will devised more precious treasure, the covenant conferred a more valuable estate, having the sanction of this greater solemnity. And lastly the priests of the Jewish covenant were a succession of men, many in number, and "not suffered to continue by reason of death." But Jesus, "because he continueth for ever," as is testified in the words, "Thou art a priest for ever," "hath an unchangeable priesthood." No other order can supersede his. No other dispensation can annul this which He has brought in. He is always ministering to our salvation. He is always interceding for our deliverance. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Ch. 13. 8.

Let us then "come unto God by him." This is the use we have to make of so great a privilege. This is the benefit we are to derive from having so preeminent an High Priest. Sinful we feel ourselves, and afraid of communing with our Maker. Let us remember Christ is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Let us consider that under the cover of his protection we may draw nigh unto God, with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Each day, each hour of our lives, we feel that we fall short of duty, we feel that we need atonement for our manifold transgressions. Let us be supported by the thought that Jesus, "when he offered up himself," made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice once for all, for all the sins of all men. They who had no other priests than the sons of Aaron, must have been liable to feel distrust in the ministrations of men, who were subject to infirmities like unto their own. But our High Priest is the Son of God. We have the assurance of the oath of God that He is "consecrated for evermore." He never dies. He never fails. He is always sure to hear. He is always mighty to help. When we are weak, then He makes strong. Where we are unclean, there He purifies. Whereinsoever we are afraid, therein He gives us boldness. In whatsoever we are deficient, He makes full amends. And this He does "for evermore;" both for time and for eternity; both for whilst we live on earth, and for when we shall reign with Him in heaven; for whilst here we are walking in the way of his commandments, and for when we shall there be enjoying our part in his inheritance.

That our High Priest officiates in heaven.

1 Now of the things which we have spoken, *this is the sum*: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister || of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

|| Or, of holy things.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that † there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

† Or, they are priests.

§ 627. *The Jewish tabernacle a type of heaven.*

The apostle would here further make it manifest to the Hebrews, that Jesus is above all comparison superior to the high priest of the Mosaic covenant. So earnestly does he desire to satisfy their minds! So heartily does he commiserate that blindness, which “in part is happened to Israel!” Rom. 11. 25. So anxiously does he endeavour to hasten the day, when “all Israel shall be saved!” Rom. 11. 26. As he renews his reasoning, let us redouble our attention. As he puts in every light most likely to strike them, the truth which he would have them receive, let us try every means most likely to move them to the faith which we have received ourselves. Let us look upon them as our elder brethren in the covenant of God. Let us consider how many of their family were among the first converts to the Gospel, among our own spiritual fathers in the Lord. Let us take pains to acquire the knowledge they excel in, that we may more readily convey to them that in which they are most deficient. Nor let us be deterred from making efforts for the conversion of the Jews, by the notion that their case is hopeless, by apprehension lest the knowledge of the Gospel should only add to their condemnation. Else why did St. Paul thus labour to convert them, as well as to confirm such as were converted? It is true that if they know these things, and do them not, their sin is greater. But it is also true that they cannot do these things unless they know them. It is true, that if they do them not, sin is lying at their door. But it is also true, that if they know them not, through our slackness or unwillingness to teach, then the sin lies at ours.

The reasoning which we are now to consider, is pronounced by the apostle to be “the sum,” or head, or crown of all that he had said before. “We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” This is the chief superiority of all, in the priesthood of Jesus, He officiates not on earth but in heaven; not standing by the altar at Jerusalem, but seated at the right hand of God most High. He is a minister of the real sanctuary, in the light which cannot be approached, “and of the true tabernacle,” not the tent which men pitched in Shiloh, but the mansions of our heavenly Father’s house. For being an High Priest, He must of necessity have some offering to make, and some place in which to make it. But this place cannot be on earth, cannot be as the Jews would have it, at Jerusalem, nor his offering such as they wished, according to their law. For on earth there was another priesthood established, and other offerings by the Law appointed; which order was still observed at Jerusalem at the time when this Epistle was written. That service however was but the shadow of the heavenly ministry, and that temple the type of the heavenly sanctuary. And they that ministered therein did but minister unto shadows of things heavenly. As a proof whereof it is remarkable, that all these things were framed after directions revealed from heaven: “See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”

Hence let us learn to look for a spiritual application, in the whole economy which was established by means of Moses among the Jews. These things were but shadows and examples. And yet they were suited to instruct mankind in realities. And if the tabernacle were a type of heaven, then we may learn from what was enacted of the reverence to be paid to it, how necessary it is for them, that would approach the courts of the Most High, to be sanctified both in body and in soul. The gifts offered by the Israelites for the making of the tabernacle were not received unless freely and cheerfully given. See Exod. 25. 2. The gold with which the ark was overlaid, and all the several vessels made, was to be pure. See Exod. ch. 25. The tabernacle, however many its curtains, was to be only one tent. See Exod. 26. 5. And the lamp which burned in it was “to burn always.” Exod. 27. 20. Can we doubt that in like manner it is with willing mind that the saints in heaven sing the praises of the Lamb; or that purity of heart, and a single eye to God’s glory, are there unmingled with any base alloy; or that the church which is there collected is essentially one; or that the light in which it dwells, the light of glory and of joy, there glows for ever and ever?

God grant that we may be fitted to enjoy its brightness! God teach us to help others to be fit! God prosper our endeavours to bring our brethren the Jews into that true tabernacle, where Christ “is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens!”

Jesus the Mediator of a better covenant.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better || covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah :

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will ¹ put my laws into their minds, and write them † in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people :

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, a new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

|| Or, *testament*.

¹ Jer. 31. 33. † Gr. *give*.

† Or, *upon*.

§ 628. *The better promises of the new covenant.*

Here is introduced a new and distinct argument, to prove the superiority of Christ's ministry; "by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." And this is proved from a passage in the prophet Jeremiah, in which the new covenant is foretold, and its excellencies described at length. Now the very mention of a new covenant to supersede the old one, shews that the old one was now "faultless," not the best that could be devised; and that however well it might be adapted for its proper use, it was not intended to last for ever. Nay the very name of "new," makes the first covenant liable to be called "old." And the name of "old" implies decay, and a readiness to perish. So that the Hebrews must not be surprised, St. Paul means, if soon after the time of their reading this Epistle, the temple service should altogether cease, nay the temple itself be destroyed. And in thus proving the superiority of the Minister of the new covenant, he takes occasion to impress upon his hearers the superiority of the new covenant itself. Happy were those Israelites who had closed with this new covenant, and who were trusting in these better promises! Happy are we Christians, if we cling to these new assurances of God's pardoning love, and plead in prayer, with faith, these new promises of God's assisting grace!

What then is the agreement by which we are bound to God, and by which God has been pleased graciously to represent Himself as actually engaged in covenant to us? It is "not according to the covenant" which God made with the children of Israel, when He delivered them out of the land of Egypt; a covenant of works, which they failed to keep, and thus exposed themselves to the displeasure of the Lord. But it is a covenant, which notwithstanding their disobedience, He has made, both for them and us, in all respects more favourable. He agrees to put his laws into our minds, and to write them in our hearts; not binding us, in every minute particular of our lives, to the observance of stated acts of duty, but enabling us to understand what is his will in every thing, and moving us to desire in every thing to do it. He will be to us "a God," and we to Him "a people;" He being our Father, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, and we being his children, the servants whom He has bought with a price, the saints whom He sanctifies continually. We shall have no need of repeated instruction from each other, as to who God is, how great, how good, how greatly above all others that be named gods. For these are matters which shall be universally acknowledged amongst Christians; yea all Christians in every degree shall be familiar with this truth, which before the Gospel was almost every where forgotten, that "God is a spirit;" John 4. 24; and with this other, which before the Gospel was never known, that "God is love." 1 John 4. 8. And He will be merciful to our unrighteousness, and our sins and our iniquities He will "remember no more." He will consider them as though they were not. He will make them to be as though they had never been. He will blot them out of his own record. He will silence the accusations of our enemy, and the voice of our own reproachful consciences. He will give us repentance not to be repented of, pardon not to be doubted of, grace from which we need never fall away, heaven, in which we cannot even be tempted to transgress.

Such is God's new covenant. Such is the covenant to which all Christians have agreed. Such is the strength in which we are encouraged to work. Such is the mercy on which we are emboldened to rely. Such are the better promises on which our covenant is established. Such is the better covenant of which our High Priest is the Mediator. Never let us forget how good a covenant it is. Never let us forget that it is a covenant. Never let us cease to thank God for his goodness, in giving us pledges of security for his love to us. Never let us cease to yield, as agreed upon on our part, the free will offering of our love to Him.

The particulars of the tabernacle.

1 Then verily the first covenant had also || ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first where-in was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called * the sanctuary.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the Holiest of all;

4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

6 Now, when these things were thus ordained, the

|| Or, ceremonies.

* Or, holy.

priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them, until the time of reformation.

† Or, rites, or, ceremonies.

§ 629. *Our free access unto heaven.*

The difference between the two covenants may be observed to great advantage, in the directions which they severally contain for the performance of public worship. In the Old Testament, Moses was instructed to make all things according to a pattern shewed to him. He was told what must be the length, and breadth, and height, of the tabernacle, what its several parts, of what materials each part was to consist, and what things were in each to be deposited. In "the first," or outer tabernacle, called "the sanctuary," he was to put "the candlestick, the table, and the shew bread;" and "after the second veil," or curtain, in that part "which is called the Holiest of all," there was to be "the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat." And in like manner there were exact and minute directions, as to the priests who were to officiate, the offerings to be made, and as to the times, and seasons, and days. So that scarcely any single matter was left in trust to the discretion and affection of the worshippers.

Now in the New Testament on the other hand our directions for divine service are only some such short rules as these: "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" John 4. 24; and "Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Cor. 14. 40. All is left to the judgment of the church. All is to be decided by the reverence, and love, and obedient disposition of the worshippers. It is not doubted that we shall thus agree together touching what we shall ask. See Matt. 18. 19. It is not doubted that when the soul is influenced by faith and love, by zeal and humility, there will be in all public ordinances devout attention to the wishes of our Lord, unity amongst each other, and subjection to the authority of them that bear rule. Let us look to it then, that we unite to worship God, in tabernacles expressive of our respect unto his name, that we furnish them with all things needful for the due performance of a service suited to his majesty, and that we continually shew forth in them with thankfulness the Lord's death, till his coming.

But St. Paul would not stay to "speak particularly" of these several matters ordered about the tabernacle. It was not his design, in this place, to set forth the spiritual signification of its parts and furniture, of "the gifts and sacrifices" therein offered, of the "meats, and drinks, and divers washings," which were but "carnal ordinances," addressed chiefly to the senses of the body, not affording peace to the conscience, and being only "a figure for the time then present." Without explaining their figurative meaning, he insists upon this single point, as establishing the superiority of the second covenant, that only on one day each year did the high priest, and he alone, enter into the inmost sanctuary; and that "not without blood, which he offered for himself," as well as for "the errors of the people." And by this he tells us, that "the Holy Ghost signified, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." Whereas in the Gospel all are plainly told by our great High Priest Himself, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved." John 10. 9. All may now enter, every day, into "the Holiest of all." All may approach unto the mercyseat of God, crying "Abba, Father," Gal. 4. 6, with the confidence of sons. All are invited to draw near and partake of the bread and wine, which signify and represent unto us the body and blood of Christ crucified. All are urged to press forward towards the presence of God, to go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage of the Lamb, to be with Christ, where He is, for ever.

O God, who hast thrown open to us the gates of heaven, give us the heart to long to enter in! O Saviour, who hast once for all made offering of thy blood, not for thyself, but for our transgressions, make us sensible that through Thee we now are cleansed make us zealous that through thy grace we may now be holy!

Christ the mediator of the New Testament.

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building,

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh :

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?

15 And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

|| Or, fault.

* Or, be brought in.

† Or, purified.

‡ Or, purple.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity * be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead : otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

18 Whereupon neither the first testament was † dedicated without blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and ‡ scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,

20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

§ 630. *The blood of Christ cleanseth from sin*

In the Law we read, "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Lev. 17. 11. But this was only in reference to transgressions against the Law, and to penalties which were to be inflicted, during this world, in the flesh. So that "the blood of bulls and of goats," killed in sacrifice, and "the ashes of an heifer," that had been burnt as a sacrifice, "sprinkling the unclean," could do no more than sanctify to the purifying the flesh, to the exempting it from legal penalties. And in order to make atonement for the sins of the soul, to redeem us from everlasting death, and to obtain for us "good things to come," it was needful for our High Priest, to enter in once for all through the heavenly tabernacle, into the very heaven of heavens itself, there for us to offer the spotless sacrifice of his own most precious blood. And surely they who had been used to reckon themselves in any degree purified by the sacrifices of the Law, must acknowledge how much more likely it was that the blood of Christ, who through the operation of the Holy Spirit presented Himself blameless unto God, should purify not only the flesh but the conscience, so as for us henceforth with a clear conscience to serve the living God. Oh that we who have never seen with our eyes the convulsions of slaughtered animals on the altar, may be able to feel with no less force, how much we owe to Christ dying for us on the cross!

Thus it was that He became the Mediator of the Gospel, here spoken of as a new instrument of agreement, vouchsafed graciously from God to man. Thus it was, even by death; and for this end, that by his dying He might make atonement for those manifold transgressions, for which the former covenant made no provision; and that thus the chosen people of God, they who are called under either dispensation, might receive not merely blessings in this world, but that which is promised for the future, an eternal inheritance. For as a testament or will is not of force till after a man is dead, as the death of the testator must take place before any benefit is received by the other party; so the death of Christ was needful for our gain in the new covenant between God and man by Christ Jesus, which is therefore referred to by Himself as the New Testament in his blood. See Luke 22. 20. What a will was this for God to make! What an inheritance for man to gain! What a death for Christ to die! What a life for us, to live for ever!

And it is for this reason that "the first testament was dedicated" not without blood, to signify the necessity of the death of Christ. It was for this that Moses, after rehearsing to the people all the words of the Lord, took the blood of the sacrifices, and sprinkled with it "both the book and all the people," saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Exod. 24. 8. It was for this that "moreover he sprinkled with blood" the tabernacle, and all its furniture, and whatsoever was not to be otherwise purified either with water or with fire. It was for this that throughout the Law it was ordained that "without shedding of blood is no remission." Never therefore let us count for an unholy thing the blood of that better testament, which God has graciously made in our favour! Never let us act as if we were not aware, that its use is to purify our conscience "from dead works to serve the living God." Rather let us thankfully bear in mind that our Lord has, by the offering of Himself once made, obtained our eternal redemption. Rather let us say joyfully unto God, every one of us, in our Saviour's name, and referring to the atonement of his blood: "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Ps. 51. 7.

How Christ offered Himself once for the sin of man.

23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heaven should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with

blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

§ 631. *How Christ will appear unto them that look for Him.*

The things on earth, the things made by the hands of man, for the services of the Jewish tabernacle and temple, these patterns of things in the heavens, were of necessity purged or purified with the shedding and sprinkling of blood; in order that they might correctly represent the heavenly things, the real atonement once made for sin by the blood of Christ, and the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, to which we are admitted through the mediation of our Lord. For Christ entered not into the sanctuary on earth. He went not into the holy of holies, in the tabernacle or the temple at Jerusalem, "but into heaven itself," before the real mercysseat, the throne of God, surrounded as it is, not by carved cherubims, but by ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels, there appearing as our Advocate in his Father's presence. What a consoling thought is this to the contrite sinner! What an encouragement to the stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, who is contending against the world, the flesh, and the devil, which wage ever fierce war against the soul! But, behold, these can say with confidence, behold Christ is on our side. He stands ready in God's presence to plead our cause. When we were born in sin, He prevailed that we should by baptism be born anew to righteousness. When we have fallen away from grace, He interceded, and we have been tried once more. When through our many remaining infirmities, we are still far, very far, short of what we ought to be, even his appearing in our behalf is enough to silence the tongue of our accusers; and we repeat in triumph over them that would condemn us: "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8. 34.

Not that we may suppose that He there offers Himself often, as it was the law for the high priest to enter every year into the holy place with blood, though not his own. For then must the same sacrifice have been often offered; since our High Priest is One who abides continually; and since the sacrifice which He offers is Himself. "But now once," at the end of one dispensation and at the beginning of another, "hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Whence it follows, that the atonement which He made reaches backwards throughout all ages past, as well as forwards throughout all that are to come; that it is sin which He put away by his sacrifice, that He did put it away, and that it was by sacrificing Himself. And as surely as all men have death appointed for their portion, as largely as the sentence of death extends, as universally as the judgment may be expected, so surely, so largely, so universally, for so many of mankind, even for all, was Christ once offered, to bear their sins.

But though He once took on Him the burden of the sins of all, can all reflect with joy that they shall one day see Him come again, and that with glory and great power, from his seat at the right hand of God, to pronounce judgment on the children of men? Far from it. Only they who now watch for his coming, only they who now live as if they think that He will come, only these, regard his second coming with hope and gladness, for unto them that thus "look for him," and unto them only, "shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." But to them how full of peace and holy ecstasy is the prospect of his glorious appearing; when He shall come as Judge, and no sins of theirs to rise up in judgment against them; when He shall be manifest as Saviour, and no evil heart of unbelief in them to hinder their enjoying his salvation; when sin blotted out shall be sin no more; when the sinner saved shall be the saint glorified!

Lord, let us now look for Thee as Thou wouldst have us, that hereafter we may find in Thee all that we desire! Lord manifest Thyself now unto us as a Saviour from sin, that we may then find in Thee a Saviour from death and hell, a Saviour unto life everlasting!

The Law could not by its sacrifices make the worshippers perfect.

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those *sacrifices* there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body || hast thou prepared me :

6 In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein* ; which are offered by the law ;

9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.

|| Or, thou hast fitted me.

He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins :

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God ;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

15 *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us : for after that he had said before,

16 This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will ' put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ;

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

18 Now where remission of these *is*, there is no more offering for sin.

¹ Jer. 31. 33.

§ 632. *Christ perfects for ever them that are sanctified.*

In this passage the chief argument of the Epistle is concluded ; and the important conclusion is brought home to the conviction of the Hebrews, that whereas the Law could never " make the comers thereunto perfect," the Gospel could ; the High Priest of our profession, having by once offering Himself " perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Now that this was not done by the sacrifices of the Law is evident from the fact that they were over and over again repeated in behalf of the very same offenders. A renewed remembrance of sins was made year by year, so that it would occur frequently to each worshipper, in the course of his natural life. Whereas, had the worshippers been once thoroughly purified, they would " have had no more conscience of sins." So entire is the peace of mind which ensues on a right sense of God's forgiveness !

And further " it is not possible" in the nature of the things, " that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." And accordingly in a prophecy, which the Jews allowed to pertain to the Messiah, the efficacy of burnt offerings, and of all such sacrifices for sin, is taken away, denied, disclaimed ; and the other way of atonement is established, the Son coming into the world, taking on Him our flesh, to do the will of God, to die for our sins. It is by this will then, this will of God, fulfilled and satisfied, it is by this that we are sanctified, " through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." So infinite in value is this heavenly sacrifice ! So possible is it, nay so certain, that the blood of Jesus Christ can take away sin, has taken it away !

Once more, let it be observed that according to the Law the very same sacrifices were repeatedly offered ; the priests standing in the temple one day after another, engaged in the same services, and slaughtering and burning animals of the same kind ; " which can never take away sins." Else the same needed not to have been repeated. But Christ Jesus makes no such repeated offerings, " after he had offered one sacrifice for sins," He " for ever sat down at the right hand of God." His work was complete. His victory was won. He sat down, for He had said, " It is finished." John 19. 30. He sat down, for He had yet to wait until the day of judgment for the full manifestation of his victory. He sat down, " for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Yes, his one offering has done all. His one offering of Himself is able to perfect us for ever. We ought to know that we need no other atonement. We ought to feel that we are now actually reconciled unto God. We ought to live as sons that sometime were disobedient, but are now loving God with so much the more fervent affection, in proportion as we have been abundantly forgiven. Yes, the Holy Ghost bears witness to us, that God will now thus give unto us the enlightened mind, the willing heart, the knowledge of the truth, and zeal in well doing. And after bearing this testimony the same Spirit has assured us of God, that He will remember no more our sins and iniquities. It is because these are remitted that no more sacrifice is offered. Oh that we may never foolishly attempt, by any work or worship of ours, to make fresh atonement for our sins ! And since there is now no more offering for sin made, we may be sure that our sins are remitted. Oh that we might feel so purified by the blood of Christ, as to have " no more conscience of sins ;" none of the fleshly mind afresh to sin, none of the spirit of bondage again to fear !

Motives to faith and holiness.

19 Having therefore, brethren, || boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 By a new and living way, which he hath * consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

21 And *having* an high priest over the house of God;

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him that hath said, 'Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

31 *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

|| Or, *liberty*.

* Or, *new made*.

1 Deut. 32. 35. Rom. 12. 19.

§ 633. *Privileges, and duties, and warnings.*

The apostle here sums up the chief points which he has established in former parts of the Epistle, that he may apply them to the Hebrews, and to us also, as motives of great force to produce stedfastness in the faith, and kind interest and active exertion in each other's spiritual welfare, and especially perseverance and mutual encouragement in our attendance on public worship. Let us therefore remember that the holy of holies, even the heaven of heavens, has been opened unto us by the blood of Jesus. We have reason to have good courage in the attempt to enter in. Jesus is our "new and living way." We enter "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," which was separated from his soul by death, that we, both in soul and body, might live for ever. We have "an high priest over the house of God," one who has once made atonement for us, and who intercedes for us when we pray. "Let us draw near" with an honest and good heart, "in full assurance of faith," since we have had the benefit of having been sprinkled with Christ's blood, to cleanse our evil consciences, and have had our bodies washed with the purifying waters of baptism, which is indeed "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." 1 Pet. 3. 21.

With these manifold privileges to encourage us, and with the certainty that "he is faithful that promised," "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." This was an exhortation most seasonable, at a time when the Hebrew Christians were greatly tempted, by the persecution they met with from the Jews, to make shipwreck of their faith. This is an exhortation not unseasonable now, when Christians are divided into so many different professions, and when the minds of the unstable and unwary are often driven and tossed about by every wind of doctrine, instead of resting in the haven of truth. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works;" reckoning that it is no small part of our duty to watch for and seize occasions of edifying our brethren, and to encourage them both by our words and by our example, in every thing that our Lord would have us feel and do. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;" as the Hebrews were much tempted to do, when attendance on public worship the more exposed them to persecution, and as many Christians are still much inclined to do, though to attend is now counted rather creditable than not. "But exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." The more thoroughly we are persuaded that the Lord is at hand, that there is a judgment to come, and that it will soon be here, let us the more faithfully admonish one another, let us the more fearlessly discharge our own duty to our Lord, in the face of an unbelieving world.

And here we have one more motive insisted on, from comparison with the Mosaic law, which law was sanctioned in many instances by unalterable sentence of death. How much sorer punishment must be in store for Christians, who have "received the knowledge of the truth," if they "sin wilfully!" They have no renewed sacrifice for sin to expect, but only a fiery and devouring indignation. They have treated with indignity "the Son of God." They have polluted the blood which cleansed them from sin, they have set the Holy Spirit at defiance by resisting his godly motions. And in them will be fulfilled under the New Testament, no less than under the Old, those terrible sentences, "Vengeance *belongeth* to me, and I will recompense, saith the Lord:" and again, "The Lord shall judge his people;" and again, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The recompence awaiting perseverance.

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

33 Partly whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which

bath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith; but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

§ 634. *Believing to the saving of the soul.*

This must have been a powerful argument to the Hebrews for perseverance in the faith, that they had already a great stake or interest in the Gospel, by reason of what they had suffered in its behalf. "Call to remembrance the former days," the preceding part of their own Christian course, "in which, after ye were illuminated," for the Gospel after the Law is light after darkness, "ye endured a great fight of afflictions," ye had a great conflict or struggle with afflictions. They fought against you, and you fought against them. Your sufferings endeavoured to have the mastery over your faith, and you watched and defended yourselves against their influence. "Partly whilst ye were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions;" one of the most trying kinds of all persecution, public scorn and infamy, public exposure of our sufferings, or of our sorrows. "And partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used;" one of the sufferings most appropriate to a Christian, to weep with them that weep, to share their burdens by helping to relieve them. This was the way in which the Hebrew Christians had proved their compassion for the apostle in his bonds, probably at the time when he was made a prisoner in the uproar at Jerusalem, see Acts 21. 13. 27, they had taken "joyfully the spoiling of their goods," they had professed boldly and thankfully their attachment to the Gospel, when it exposed them to the fury of a mob, and when he was himself to all appearance most unlikely to defend them. But they knew in themselves that they had laid up for them "in heaven" a better and an enduring substance, "everlasting habitations," Luke 16. 9, "bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fideth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." Luke 12. 33.

Have we ever once felt the confidence of hope that we have a stake and interest in that heavenly country? Let this be a reason with us not to cast away our "confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." If a man is brought up under the persuasion that he has a title to some fair estate, we all know with what fond attachment he clings to the hope of possessing it; we all know how much privation he endures for the present, rather than lose his title for the future, how he reckons on it as his own, long before he obtains possession, plans what he will do with it, and frames his own temper and habits, as well as those of his children after him, with a view to their fitness for the expected inheritance. Have we any such confident hope of heaven as this? Are we aware that we have need of like patience, if we would receive the things promised us by God? After we have done the will of God in one thing, we must do it in another and another. After we have done it yesterday, we must do it today. After we have done it today we must still do it tomorrow and tomorrow; as long as any tomorrow happens unto us. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." We have not long to wait. This is another reason for us to wait with patience. "Behold I come quickly." Rev. 22. 7. This is the promise of our Lord. This is another reason for us in the meantime to suffer joyfully. Short is the utmost length of our sojourning on earth; endless the eternity for which we are here prepared. Light are the utmost afflictions of this present time in the comparison, yea, "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8. 18.

Now the same Scriptures testify both that "the just shall live by faith," and that if he "draw back" God will have "no pleasure in him." Which then, let us examine, which of the two is our condition? Are we living by faith? Do we believe, so as to live accordingly? Are we spending the whole time of our sojourn upon earth in one consistent course of holiness, out of the conviction that we are heirs of heaven, and as if we were preparing to enjoy it? or are we drawing back, shrinking from the pains and penalties which in an evil world ever accompany the profession of godliness? If the latter, our end is "perdition." To draw back is the way to perish everlastingly. If the former, salvation is before us. We "believe to the saving of the soul." When therefore our faith is tried by persecution, or our patience by long protracted pains, let us bethink ourselves of the assurances of our Lord, referring to everlasting joys and sorrows, "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh!" "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep!" Luke 6. 21. 25.

What faith is.

1 Now faith is the || substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead * yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not

see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, † moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

|| Or, ground, or, confidence.

* Or, is yet spoken of.

† Or, being wary.

§ 635. *The faith of the elders.*

The word here translated “substance” means confident assurance, the feeling as sure as if we were already in possession. And faith is to be assured of things hoped for, to be convinced on evidence, concerning things unseen, as firmly as if we could behold them. And religious faith in particular is to be thus convinced of things revealed to us by God, thus confidently to hope for what God has promised. Accordingly, by faith our minds receive this testimony, that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;” made all things out of nothing, made them by his word, by the expression of his will; said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” Gen. 1. 3. This is a thing which no eye of man has seen. This is a thing of which we have certain information in God’s word. And when we feel as fully persuaded that so it was, as if we had been at hand to see, then we have faith in it, then we believe it, then our hearts and minds are in that state of reliance on God’s testimony, by which “the elders obtained a good report.”

Thus Abel “obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” For “the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” Gen. 4. 4. And this was because he offered it in faith. It was faith that made his sacrifice more excellent than that of Cain. It is by virtue of his faith that “he being dead yet speaketh.” His history still admonishes us in the Old Testament. His example is here pressed upon our attention in the New. And the lesson which he teaches us is this: Offer unto God the best of what thou hast. Offer not that which seems wise in thine own eyes, but that which God has required at thine hands. Offer, what thou offerest, not grudgingly or, of necessity, “for God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. 9. 7. And to thy brother, if he be wroth, offer words of kindness; if he smite thee on thy right cheek, offer to him the other also; see Matt. 5. 39; if he rise up to slay thee, strive not thou to slay thy brother, but rather than hurt him, offer to die thyself.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” He went not the way of all flesh. He died not, and yet he “was not found.” He was not to be seen on earth either alive or dead; “because God had translated him,” had taken him away direct from life on earth to life in heaven, had made him to be a signal proof to the patriarchs, as Elijah was to the Jews, and Christ to Christians, that this mortal body, can if God sees fit at once put on immortality. And this was owing to his faith. For before this happened “he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” And this he could not have done without believing. For no one would come to God at all, no one would take the pains to please God, except under the conviction “that he is,” that there really does exist this one living and true God, perfect in might, wisdom, and goodness, and also that “he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” that He will honour them that honour Him, as well as put to shame them that despise Him. See 1 Sam. 2. 30. And that Enoch thus believed we know further from the fact, that he laboured to impress this faith upon his brethren. For these were Enoch’s words which we read in the Epistle of St. Jude, ver. 14, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.”

Noah also was both a believer and a “preacher of righteousness.” 2 Pet. 2. 5. He believed God’s warning voice. He was moved with such salutary fear of God’s judgments that he took the way of God’s appointing to escape them. By faith he “prepared an ark” so as to save himself and his family. By faith he “condemned” all those who would not believe, his obedience being sure to rise up in judgment against those who would neither listen to his words, nor follow his example. Thus he became “heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” He was not of them which draw back to perdition, but he was one of those who believe to the saving of the soul. See ch. 10. 39. Would we inherit the same righteousness, and attain the like salvation? Let us with Noah listen to God’s warnings. Let us with Enoch please God. Let us with Abel offer the sacrifice which God best likes, the willing mind, the thankful heart, resignation to his chastisements, obedience to his commands.

The faith of Abraham.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13 These all died in \dagger faith, not having received the

\dagger Gr. according to faith.

promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 \parallel Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

\parallel Or, To.

§ 636. *That we must desire a heavenly country.*

Several instances of the faith of Abraham are here insisted on, all most profitable for our instruction in righteousness. He went out from his own country into a place which was promised him for an inheritance; "not knowing whither he went," never having seen the country, never having journeyed on the road. And this he did, "when he was called." And this shews that it was "by faith." Oh let us also go readily whithersoever God calls us, whether it be to a new country, or to a new life, whether it be to live more according to his will, or to die and enter into his joy. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country." Though it was his by promise, he did not take possession without leave, but dwelt in it as a stranger, moving from place to place in tents, "with Isaac and Jacob," who had the same ground of promise to count it for their own. Oh let not us then be so cager to enjoy all that God has promised, that we cannot meekly bear what first He bids us to endure! Oh let us even in the midst of Christian privileges, and with the foretaste of Christian joys, still feel whilst we are on earth that this is not our home, but wait anxiously for the heavenly Jerusalem, that city which abides for ever, "whose builder and maker is God."

Another instance of Abraham's faith was common to him with Sarah his wife. Because they "judged him faithful who had promised," they had the joy of a son born in their old age. And hence there sprung up the whole family of the children of Israel; who have ever since to the present hour been known with far greater certainty, preserved as one family with far greater purity, and increased to far greater amount of countless numbers, than any other family in the world. And these also have "all died in faith," as many as were really children of the faith of Abraham, as many as really inherited the promises made to Abraham, for it was only by faith that they could inherit them. And thus one of the most eminent of his seed expressed this feeling common to them all: "I am a stranger with thee: and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." Ps. 39. 14. Wherein it is evident that they were in expectation of some other country besides that which they enjoyed; as it is also certain that oftentimes they might if they would have returned to their first settlement in Ur of the Chaldees. Let us in like manner be glad to think that we have not here all that we could desire, glad to die that we may then receive all which God has promised. Let us desire "a better country, that is, an heavenly;" and behold, God is not ashamed to be called our God; even as He called Himself "the God of Abraham" Matt. 22. 32 our father; see Rom. 4. 16; behold God has prepared for us a city, behold Christ is gone to prepare a place for us. John 14. 2.

One more instance of the faith of Abraham, the most remarkable of all, is this, that when his obedience was put to proof by the command of God, "he offered up Isaac," yea "he laid him on the altar upon the wood," yea "he stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Gen. 22. 9, 10. And this was his only son by the free woman, the very son of whom it had been promised him, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." So that he must have believed in the ability and willingness of God "to raise him up even from the dead;" of which resurrection his deliverance was a lively figure. Oh that we may attain to the same lively persuasion that nothing is too hard for the Lord! Oh that we may attain to the same perfect obedience, to refuse nothing which the Lord has commanded! Whether it be a child that we are required to resign by death, or even a Christian privilege which God has given us for a time, and now seems to forbid us to enjoy, oh that we may have grace to say meekly unto Him, Be it unto me according to thy will!

The faith of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season:

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

|| Or, remembered.

† Or, for Christ.

‡ Or, that were disobedient.

§ 637. *How to examine our faith.*

It is worthy of remark for our comfort, in the unprofitable strife of words, which has been often raised, as to the precedency of faith or works, that St. Paul, in all his instances of faith, dwells chiefly on the works by which faith wrought in believers. And this is the way in which he shews how faith is, as he had described it, the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of what is unseen. He points out how men acted upon the commands of God, with such readiness and zeal, and devotedness, as proved that they reposed trust in the fulfilment of his promises. Thus "Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come;" referring to God's promises to his family, and not doubting that they would be fulfilled in these his sons. Thus Jacob, at his own death, when he had himself no hope of settling in the promised land, did not hesitate to bless his sons and grandsons, and to divide it as an inheritance to their children after them. Thus Joseph also, "when he died, made mention of the departure of the Israelites" out of Egypt, and gave directions for the removal of his bones, that they might be buried in the land of promise.

And the like was the case with Moses, and in like manner was the faith of his parents proved by what they did, by their acting as if sure that God's word were true. They were persuaded that He would deliver them out of Egypt. And therefore, notwithstanding the king's commandment, they did all they could to save their child, whose comeliness very likely led them to expect, that he might be designed for some great part in their deliverance. And Moses himself, when grown up, refused, on the like ground of trust in God's promise, and respect unto the recompence of God's reward, refused to be treated as "the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" refused to enjoy all the gain and pleasures of the king of Egypt's court, preferring to suffer with God's people the persecution which they encountered for clinging to the hope of a Redeemer. With as much confidence as if he were seeing God "who is invisible," he stood in Pharaoh's presence and demanded the deliverance of God's people; he went out from before his face, and led them forth from the land of their oppressors. With as much care as if he had seen the destroying angel, about to execute the sentence of the Lord, he had the passover duly kept, and all the houses of the Israelites sprinkled with blood. With as much sense of safety, as if their road were through dry land, he led the people, and they passed through the very same "Red sea," which swallowed up the whole host of their pursuers. They, by the like faith, passed through safe. By the like faith, they marched, for seven successive days, round the walls of Jericho; not doubting that in the end God would give it into their hands. And Rahab also, who would else have fallen, in the fall of that devoted city, by the like faith escaped destruction; having proved her faith by saving the life of the spies, and having professed it by declaring, when she let them go, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land." Joshua 2. 9.

Let us examine then, do we in like manner really act, as if the things which we profess to believe, were conceived by us to be true? Do we bless our children, and labour for their advancement, not so much in the goods of this world, as "concerning things to come?" Do we so provide for our bodies whilst on earth as if we considered that they will be raised up from the grave to live again in heaven for ever? Do we refuse to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and choose in preference the reproach of Christ, out of respect to the crown of glory which He will give us? Dare we encounter for conscience sake the wrath of them who can only kill the body, out of our fear of Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell? See Matt. 10. 28. This is the proof of faith, to do our duty fearlessly, to love our brethren affectionately. This is the faith by which we are saved, to feel as sure as if we could see Christ hanging on the cross, that He was crucified for our sins, and that by his stripes we are healed.

Instances of faith manifest in the fathers.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

¹ 2 Mac. 7. 7.

36 And others had trial of ~~cruel~~ mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

|| Or, foreseen.

§ 638. *How much more we ought to believe than they.*

The main argument of this chapter is to be collected from the end of it. If all these without enjoying the thing promised, acted so devotedly on the faith of it, how much more ought we, who have had Christ crucified set before us in reality, how much more ought we for whom God has provided this better thing, the certainty of the fact, instead of the expectation of the promise, how much more ought we to obey heartily and thoroughly, how much more than they, who "without us," without that happening which has happened to us, could not have been made perfect, could not have had their hope fulfilled, their salvation accomplished! Let us therefore read the Old Testament under these impressions. Let us under these impressions hear the names and sufferings of the holy men of old here mentioned. Is our faith more lively, is our obedience more devout, than that of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae? In proportion as the testimony of facts past is more conclusive to the mind, than the promises of things future, are we better able than they, nay are we able, through faith to subdue kingdoms, the reign of sin and of Satan in our hearts, to work righteousness, the righteousness of the Gospel in our lives, to obtain promises, the gifts of grace by the power of prayer, to stop the mouths of lions, by our watchfulness and sobriety cutting off all occasion from that adversary the devil, who "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour?" 1 Pet. 5. 8. Can we as they did, quench the violence of fire, the fire of our own passions burning in our hearts? Can we like them escape the edge of the sword, that two edged sword, the word of God, escaping what it threatens by obtaining what it promises? Do we feel God's strength made perfect in our weakness, so as to be able to say with the apostle, "When I am weak then am I strong?" 2 Cor. 12. 10. And do we go forth in this strength of God, both defending our own souls from harm, and making the heathen to perish out of the Lord's inheritance; not destroying them by the weapons of worldly warfare, but converting them, to be no more heathens, by our prayers, and by our practice, and by our bearing witness to the truth?

By faith "women received their dead raised to life again." Do we sorrow over our dead, not as they that have no hope? See 1 Thess. 4. 13. Do we commit their bodies to the ground "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life?" (Burial Service.) "And others," when they might have escaped by renouncing the truth, preferred torture for the present, "that they might obtain a better resurrection." Are we willing to bear the worst that can happen to us now, yea the worst that men can do unto us by scorn or violence, and the more fierce encounters of our own lusts that war in our members; rather than by yielding to present pleasure to lose the crown of glory which passeth not away? "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder," they were pierced through, they were smitten to death, by the sword. In all these ways they were tempted by the extreme sufferings of the body, to yield up the constancy of the mind. And when they were such as that this world was at the best unworthy of them, they fared in it the worst of all men. Do we, like them, count all things but loss for Christ? Could we bear cheerfully the most painful death? Do we receive thankfully the most unexpected reverses in life? Are our minds so familiar with the sufferings of our Lord, are our hearts so anxious for likeness to his image, that we could be content, if it should so seem good to God, to be driven from the many comforts of our home, with no clothing but the skins of animals, no house but the dens and caves of the earth, to be at once destitute, afflicted, and tormented? This is the disposition which must come of our believing what Christ has really suffered for our sakes. This is the devout obedience to the will of God, which comes of loving Him who first loved us.

O God, who hast written for our instruction the mighty works which have been done of old through faith, before the coming of Christ in the flesh, grant that we, believing both what He has done, and what Thou hast promised for his sake yet to do in our behalf, may come behind in no one good thing, for the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Motives to patient endurance.

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving

against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

|| Or, beginner.

§ 639. *God chastens us as sons.*

The holy men of old, who by faith both suffered and did so great things, are not only examples for us to follow, but witnesses, whose presence ought to stir us up in following. Behold, they encompass us, thick in numbers, as a cloud. They look on, whilst we run the race of holiness on earth, with a view to the prize of heaven. There is joy in their presence when we prosper in our course. There is sorrow when we fall or fail. Let us then cast aside every encumbrance, whatsoever hinders us from getting on apace, and especially the sin that most besets us, whichsoever be the temptation of the world, of the flesh, or of the devil, that most hinders our prospect of success. "Looking unto Jesus," looking off from all other things, that we may have the eye singly fixed on Him. Looking unto Him, "as the author and finisher of our faith," in whom it is begun, continued, and ended; in whom we believe, and through whom we believe; and who is Himself in this very thing our most eminent example; having "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame," having thus "run with patience," with perseverance and endurance his appointed race, and having attained to sit "down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Oh let us, when we are tempted to repine under affliction, let us consider what our Lord endured. When friends desert us, when strangers oppress us, when the sin we would fain loathe still haunts our imagination, till the soul grows weary of the conflict, let us, as a remedy against being faint in our minds, against falling into despondency or despair, let us consider how patiently, meekly, and firmly, Christ put up with the scorn and cruel usage of the very men whom He died to save. We have not been called upon, in our strife against sin, to resist unto blood, to suffer as He did the agonies of a lingering death; though it be indeed our duty, in the mortifying of the flesh, and in deadness to the allurements of the world, to be able to say, "I die daily." 1 Cor. 15. 31. And yet how apt are we to set our hearts on the joys of this life, how apt to think that it is best for us to prosper here, how apt to forget the exhortation which speaketh unto us as children: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord;" for is it not next to scorn to think that prosperity would be better, is not this to think that we best know what is good for us? "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:" is not this fainting, to be more dead to duty, less alive to joy? "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," so that chastisement might serve us for a token of his love. "And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," so that the blows He gives us ought to help in convincing us, that He is making us more fit to be taken unto Himself.

What, know we not that this is the way of earthly parents, that they thus deal with the son whom they acknowledge for their own; that they chasten him in order to his amendment; and that the chastisement they inflict is a sign to the beholders, not that the parents are lacking in affection, still less that they are not the parents, but on the contrary that they are, and that the child whom they chastise is acknowledged for their son? Thus then let us receive the chastisements of God; yea, whatever sufferings we are called upon for his sake to endure. It is my Father which is in heaven, who inflicts this for my good. I receive it as a proof that He is my Father. I take it for a kind token that He owns me for his son. I am thankful to think that He takes the pains to correct me. I am glad to find that He is carefully preparing me to dwell in the light of his countenance for ever. O heavenly Parent, let me not have my own way and will, but bend me to comply with thine! O Abba Father, give me grace to profit by all needful discipline in this my childhood upon earth, that under the salutary fear of thy correction, and in the encouraging expectation of thy praise, I may grow up unto the likeness of thine image, and unto a fitness for thy presence, even to be meet the inheritance of the saints in light!

How we ought to support ourselves under chastisement.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make *†*straight paths for your feet, lest

† Or, even.

† Or, fall from.

that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.

14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently, lest any man *†*fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no *‡*place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

‡ Or, way to change his mind.

§ 640. *That without holiness no man can see the Lord.*

What father has not felt it go to his heart to be forced to inflict punishment on his children? It is true that in punishing them he may oftentimes be indulging his own angry or revengeful temper. But the most irritable of parents fail not sometimes to reflect, what is always present to the kind and tenderhearted, when they are applying the rod to their offspring, that it is their own flesh and blood which feels the blow. And it is the consciousness of this sympathy, as well as a conviction of the father's authority, which makes the children at once reverence and love the hand that chastises them. How much more then ought we meekly to submit to the chastisements of our spiritual Father, of whom we cannot doubt, that "for our profit" He chastises, since we know of Him that "God is love!" 1 John 4. 8. The child cannot indeed feel that the chastening is joyous, at the time when it is inflicted. It is grievous to the child; or it would not be chastening. The child usually at the moment begs to be let off; being unable, under the agony of the flesh, to value properly the improvement which is to be effected in the spirit. But the father answers, I do it for your greater good. And thus we may conceive God telling us, in our sufferings, It is good for you to be afflicted. It is in order for you to be partakers of holiness and of heaven. It gives you grief for the present, but joy for ever. And accordingly if we are now exercised by it as we ought to be, if the stubborn field that is in our hearts be well furrowed by the plough of adversity, if the harrow of persecution, or of any manner of affliction, tear up the weeds of hurtful lusts, or break the stony ground of pride and unbelief, it will afterwards yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." We are addressed as if our strength were failing, or at least our spirits giving way in the midst of our race. We are exhorted, as if it lay with us, by our watchfulness, and diligence, and resolution, to renew our exertions, and to win the prize. And this is because we have the gift of the Spirit. This is because God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Therefore we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. See Phil. 2. 12. Therefore, when we feel inclined to flag, we must stir up our strength, not by trusting in ourselves, but by having recourse in all humility unto Him, who delights to "revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isa. 57. 15. He will help us to "make straight the path" for our feet, for He can make "crooked things straight;" Isa. 42. 16; "lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." Nay, more, He can make the lame man to "leap as a hart." Isa. 35. 6.

But how different is our race of holiness from that which men call a race on earth; where all run, but only one receives the prize, and wherein each is as much concerned to hinder his brother as to get on himself! Here we must "follow peace with all men." We must not strive against each other. Nay we must help each other forward. We must follow peace and also "holiness." And this will come of our "looking unto Jesus," ver. 2, as the end and object of our course; for without holiness "no man shall see the Lord." Let us watch therefore in the spiritual husbandry of our hearts, that no root of bitterness against each other be suffered to spring up; that no one of us be tempted by anger or lust to barter for present pleasure our spiritual inheritance. Let us think of Esau who for a single meal "sold his birthright." Let us call to mind how bitterly he wept when all too late. Let us remember that however boundless is God's mercy in forgiving, this is revealed for our encouragement in holiness, not for our security in sin. If now we resist warnings, if now we abuse privileges, if now we neglect opportunities, the time may come, and God only knows how soon, when we shall cry, but He will not hear, when we shall be sentenced to that outer darkness, where shall be "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 22. 13.

The glories of the two covenants compared.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new [†]covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, * let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

|| Or, enrolled.

† Or, testament.

‡ Or, may be shaken.

* Or, let us hold fast.

§ 641. *How much we have to answer for as Christians.*

"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke 12. 48. These words of our Lord, like many other expressions to the same effect throughout the Gospel, form a salutary fence around the doctrines of grace; and prevent us from abusing what we know of God's love, by keeping us afraid of what is revealed of his judgments. Thus in the comparison before us, between the Law and the Gospel, we are warned that we "refuse not him that speaketh," even Jesus who had just before been described as speaking better things by his blood than Abel, the one interceding for mercy, the other crying aloud for vengeance. And yet we may not safely neglect to listen to the voice of Christ. Nay "if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth," if they who disobeyed under the former state of things were sure to suffer, much more we, if we neglect this "great salvation," ch. 2. 3, much more we, "if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Awful indeed to all, it must be allowed, is the account of what happened in Mount Sinai, which no hand might touch, and which "burned with fire." Most affecting is the description in the book of Exodus, ch. 19, 20, and Deuteronomy, ch. 4, 5, of the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," of "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words." Most fearful to the senses, and through the senses to the apprehension of the mind, must have been these sights and sounds, when the people entreated that they might hear no more, when not even a beast might touch the mount and live, when Moses himself was so terrified at the sight, as to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And yet to us there is more of awe, in proportion as there is more of mercy, in the revelation of which we are partakers. We have more to fear if we refuse to hearken, in proportion as we have more to hope if we obey, nay more help at once given us towards obedience, more peace, and ease, and confidence, at once imparted for our enjoyment. Ours is the "mount Sion," our city "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," of this we are already citizens, our names enrolled as members of the same state with "an innumerable company of angels." With these we live in sweet communion, with these, and with "the general assembly and the church of the firstborn," whose names are written in the same holy place; with these we live in sweet communion, unto these we have access by faith under the Gospel, unto these, and unto God Himself. We live in company with "God the Judge of all," drawing near to Him in prayer continually; and with "the spirits of just men," with whom we are one by love, not only whilst yet in the body, but also when "made perfect," delivered from the burden of the flesh. And we are come unto "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant," our Advocate with the Father, our abiding High Priest, our never failing sacrifice, whose blood washes away our sins, and whose voice pleads for our forgiveness.

What a happy state is this for us to live in! What a profitable communion this to hold, with the excellent of the earth, with the great God of heaven! He will shake yet once more the things of his own appointment. As the former covenant is done away; so the earth also, and all the works that are therein will hereafter be removed. But their removal is as nothing, when compared with the world of grace, with the reign of righteousness, with the kingdom of Christ, which has now begun, in which we have received a place, and "which cannot be moved." All things else come to an end. But in us is begun a life which lasts for ever. We have an interest in a kingdom which is endless. Let us then serve God, as He would have us, with thankfulness and love, for our "God is love;" 1 John 4. 16; and with reverence and godly fear, for He is also a "consuming fire."

Exhortation to several Christian duties.

- 1 Let brotherly love continue.
- 2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
- 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.
- 4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.
- 5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, ¹ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

¹ Josh. 1. 5.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

7 Remember them which || have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation:

8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

|| Or, are the guides.

§ 642. *That we should be constant in our faith and love.*

How forcibly are motives of the most opposite character brought to bear in Scripture upon the same Christian duties! Usually it is because God has loved us, that we are exhorted to love one another. Here it is immediately after reminding us that "our God is a consuming fire," ch. 12. 29, that the God revealed in the Gospel is the very same as the God revealed in the Law, One who in the end will destroy the wicked, it is immediately after this fearful warning, that St. Paul exhorts us, "Let brotherly love continue." And by the same motive he would urge us to exercise hospitality to them that are in want, to give refreshment according to our means unto those who apply for our assistance; adding for our encouragement a hint, that in so doing we may, when least we think it, fare like them who have entertained "angels unawares." So often are they wanting in this world's goods who most abound in heavenly treasures! So well is it worth our while to open our doors to all, if we might but once give food and lodging to a true servant of the Lord!

Under the same powerful sanctions we are exhorted to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them;" to feel unto prisoners as though we were fellow prisoners; and in like manner towards those who are in adversity, as though we were so also; remembering that as long as we are "in the body" we are liable to all the ills which we find befalling our brethren. Marriage, under the same sanctions, is to be respected by them that are single, and to be kept undefiled by them that are married. For God will judge all, who in either state, transgress the bounds which He has set to their desires. Contentment is another duty here enforced; whilst at the same time covetousness is forbidden. For why indeed should we be anxious for the morrow, when we have God's assurance, that He will never leave us nor forsake us? And how much greater would be our sin, how much heavier our punishment, if we distrust his fatherly provision and protection, when He has given us authority to say of Him, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me!" Oh that we may cast all our care on Him, knowing that He careth for us! Oh that we may never provoke Him by our disbelief of his love to cast us away in his displeasure!

Another duty of great weight here insisted on, is that we "remember them which have the rule" over us. And this means that we pay all due respect to those who rule in things spiritual, for the same are they who "have spoken unto" us "the word of God." It is their faith which we are to follow, it is the end of their conversation that we are to consider. The heaven to which they are advancing must be our end also. The Saviour whom they preach must be also our Lord. Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." He is the same to them that teach and to them that learn. He is the same from the foundation of the world, yea before the worlds were made; and will be the same when the worlds shall be no more. Therefore let not us be changeable. Had but Christians from the beginning of the Gospel obeyed this one plain direction, to follow the faith of their spiritual guides, had but their spiritual rulers borne in mind, that as Jesus Christ is unchangeable, so the Gospel could be but one, how safe should we have been from the "divers and strange doctrines" which have agitated the Christian community! Let us consider how great is the evil, how grievous the scandal, of our disunion; how utterly unprofitable in the primitive times were the disputes about the lawfulness of different kinds of meats, how alike vain and mischievous are the many idle questions, which have ever since, up to the present time, engrossed the thoughts of men eminent for their knowledge and profession of the truth. And let us therefore endeavour to vie with one another, not in subtilty of argument, but in our proficiency of grace, in our respectful remembrance of our spiritual guides, in our attachment to the old paths, in our earnest desire for our heavenly inheritance, and in the constancy, as well as the warmth of our affection, for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Concluding exhortations.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 ¹ For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, † giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

17 Obey them that || have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting † covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, * working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23 Know ye, that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25 Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

¹ Mic. 2. 10.

† Gr. *confessing to*.

|| Or, *guide*.

‡ Or, *testament*.

* Or, *doing*.

§ 643. *The ministers and the flock.*

At the conclusion of this Epistle, St. Paul gives weight to his exhortations by once more referring to his main argument, the fulfilment of the Law in the Gospel; or rather the superiority of the Gospel to the Law, in every one of those points, in which the Jews were apt to think that they must lose by conforming to the Gospel, and amongst others, the altar and the sacrifices which on the altar were offered. Of these he might probably be reminded by having mentioned, ver. 9, the meats about which the Hebrews were tempted to dispute. And his argument is this, we Christians have an altar far better than the altar in the temple at Jerusalem; and a sacrifice of which they who minister at the Jewish tabernacle or temple have no right to eat. We have Christ crucified. We eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood. And by this means we have life in us, eternal life. For his flesh thus eaten spiritually is meat indeed. And his blood is drink indeed. See John 6. 55. And to prove that this Jesus is our sacrifice, let it be observed that as the Jewish sacrifices were burnt without the camp, so our Lord also, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate," was crucified beyond the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

When we consider these sufferings of our Lord, the shame and pain which for our sakes He endured, how gladly ought we to go forth "unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach;" how cheerfully ought we to submit to be the scorn of men, and to be counted for outcasts amongst our brethren. And when we remember that here we have "no continuing city," how little ought we to grieve in any call which may arise, to get us up out of our own country, or out of our own home, if we really are seeking "one to come," and if we have reason to hope that this will help to our attaining it! No, let us make bold to own our thankfulness to God, and let us be free both to give much and to give up all, for his sake. Whatever reproach we may incur, let us through Christ, our High Priest, offer to God continually the sacrifice of praise, which the prophet calls the "calves of our lips," Hosea 14. 2, and which the apostle by a like figure here speaks of as fruit presented on the altar. And whatever be the extent of our possessions in this our home of short continuance on earth, let us be mindful to do good with it, and to communicate our own blessings as largely as we can, "for with such sacrifices," when offered through the merits and mediation of our Lord, "God is well pleased."

And here once more we are reminded that we owe obedience and submission to them that have the rule over us. And that these are spiritual rulers we know, by its being added, "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Now one reason why the rest ought to be subject unto them is this, that they may keep this watch "with joy, and not with grief." Another reason is that for them to do it with grief would be "unprofitable" to those for whom they watch. It is the interest then of the people to give heed unto their minister; to submit to his directions, to obey his rule. It should be their joy by these means to give him ground of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. It should be one object of their prayers to pray for him; as it ought to be also the heart's desire of the minister to have "a good conscience" in respect of his flock, "in all things willing to live honestly," wishing and endeavouring to be a faithful steward of the

mysteries of God, to adorn in all things the doctrine of God our Saviour. Oh that He who is the Shepherd of the shepherds may maintain throughout his church this mutual affection between the pastor and the flock; that when separated they may pray to be together, when together may so live in love as to wish to part no more for ever!

But for this "the God of peace" must be with us. He "that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep," He must make us perfect, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant," "perfect in every good work to do his will;" He must work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. Then would ministers and people live together in uninterrupted harmony; the one watching for their precious charge of never dying souls, the other receiving thankfully the word of exhortation, the one ever studying how best to write or speak for the edifying of the other, the other counting what is said or written, though long, to be but short, seeing that they would gladly receive more. Such is the temper which the apostle would enforce. Such is the mutual love which he recommends by the warmth of his oft repeated salutation. Such is the good will amongst each other, and the interchange of good offices, which God designs to establish between the minister and the flock. Yes, the work is his. It must be of God's doing. It is most opposite to that pride and selfishness of ours, which else makes them that rule oppressive, and them that are subjected disobedient. It is the work of God. Of Him let us seek that it may prosper. To Him, whether it prosper, or through our folly fail, to Him be "glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES, I. 1—12.

That we must rejoice in our trials.

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, which are scattered abroad, greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree || rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

|| Or, *glory*.

§ 644. *The spiritual uses of poverty and of riches.*

There were two apostles of the name of James; and the writer of this Epistle is the one, who in St. Mark's account of the crucifixion, is spoken of as "James the less." Mark 15. 40. He is several times mentioned in the New Testament, and there is reason to suppose, that whilst the other apostles went forth in different directions, to "preach the Gospel to every creature," Mark 16. 15, St. James continued to reside at Jerusalem, as president of the church in that city and neighbourhood. There his ministrations were of course chiefly confined to Jews. And thence he might with great propriety address his Epistle "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting," or wishing them in all things well. But trusting as we do that we are children of the faith of Abraham, and hoping that we shall be counted among the thousands of the twelve tribes, which shall be hereafter sealed, see Rev. 7. 4, we may profitably apply to our own instruction every one of the exhortations here set down. These refer partly to the state of persecution in which all Christians then lived, especially converted Jews, and partly they are directed against the sins of the tongue, including disputations, speculations, and objections, which the Jews were apt to substitute for the practice of religion. Let us then be prepared here to learn that practice is the true test of profession, that good works are the right proof of faith, and that of good works there are none of more importance than holy and edifying words.

And first let us observe, that to fall into temptation, so we fall not by it, so it lead not to our sinning, but to our growth by faith and patience, ought to be unto us a matter of rejoicing. We must not indeed forget that our Lord has taught us to pray to God, "lead us not into temptation." Luke 11. 4. A humble sense of our own infirmity must make us utter this prayer in earnest, must make us heartily desire to be spared the trials, in which we find ourselves so apt to fall. And yet when it has come to pass that we are tempted, when it has pleased God that we should thus be tried, we must aim always to rejoice in the tribulation. And our best way to gain the victory would be this, to be persuaded that we shall gain it, to rejoice in the thought of gaining it, to feel satisfied that the trial, now it is really come, is surely come for good. Let us therefore watch that the trying of our faith prove the exercise of our patience. Let us endeavour to let patience have her perfect work. And let us be aware, that it is only by being subjected to trial that we can become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Only let us never forget that for our success we must have help of God. Nay, to be enabled to take this just view of our conflict, we must ask wisdom of God; that wisdom which is "easy to be intreated." Ch. 3. 17. We must ask of Him, who will neither refuse to give, nor reproach us with his gifts when given. Apt we are to suppose that though we cannot act without help, we can at least think just as we please. But wise thoughts, no less than holy actions, are, as here we learn, the gift of God, the fruit of the Spirit; to be granted, like any other grace, only to our prayers, only to prayers offered in faith. Let us therefore pray "nothing wavering," nothing doubting that God will grant, nothing hesitating in our wishes between God and mammon, not loving sin in our hearts whilst with our lips we ask for holiness, not inwardly bent upon being wicked whilst professedly we wish to be devout. This is to be doubleminded; and they that are so are unstable in all their ways. They have no faithfulness in prayer; they have no firmness in purpose; they have no consistency in conduct. "Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

See then, if we pray faithfully, and have grace to think thus wisely of our trials, see how we might prevail in some of the chief temptations which are likely to befall us! Are we poor? is poverty our trial? Do the inconveniences of want oppress our spirits, lay snares for our truth or honesty, tempt us to discontent or unthankfulness? Here we learn how to rejoice in this temptation. We may rejoice in being exalted by the Gospel. We may rejoice in finding grace through Christ, in want to exercise contentment, in cold and nakedness to be thankful unto God, and in the most abject poverty to be rich in the sure prospect of our heavenly inheritance. Or are riches the means of tempting us? Here we may rejoice to think that they are the means of humbling us, if they lead us to reflect, that we have so much the more to part with when we are laid in that last home, where the rich and the poor meet together. Today we flourish. Tomorrow we wither. Today we have all that wealth can purchase. Tomorrow we become cold and naked, loathsome to the sight, and fit only for the grave. Might not thoughts like these greatly help to turn our hearts to riches which never fail? And might we not thus find great reason to rejoice in the riches which else make us worldly minded? Oh that we may thus endure every temptation, thus turn every trial into an occasion of triumph, thus in every conflict gain a victory over sin and Satan, and thus receive at the end of all, "the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him!"

Warnings against false religion.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with || evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the en-

grafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his * deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

|| Or, evils.

* Or, doing.

§ 645. *What true religion is.*

It is the folly or the pride of man, to raise objections to what is revealed in the word of God. It is the condescension of God that answers them. Because we ought to count it all joy when we "fall into divers temptations," ver. 2, because God makes good come out of the evil, therefore it might be objected that it is God who tempts us, and thence we might be led to excuse ourselves in sin. But no, St. James replies, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man;" that is to say, He no more tempts than He is capable of being tempted. It is by our own lusts that we are drawn away, and not by God, whensoever we commit sin. Our own evil desire is the parent of sin, as sin also is the parent of death. Most foul progeny of most hateful parentage! Most daring blasphemy to father it upon God! Most tender mercy of our Lord, to provide by the words of his apostle that we should know certainly that the origin of sin is in ourselves!

And as though this were a most important point for us to understand aright, the apostle affectionately adds, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Let us be careful that in this matter we err not. Let us never lay our sins on any one but ourselves. Let us feel and acknowledge that they are always our own fault. And as to God, let us be deeply persuaded that from Him cometh only that which is good, even "every good gift, and every perfect gift," without admixture of any evil whatsoever. He it is who in the Gospel has begotten us anew to be his sons, "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." For this, though spoken of the Jews as having the Gospel preached unto them before the Gentiles, may be also applied by us most justly to ourselves, as knowing the Gospel so much better than many Christians, so long before the great body of the heathen world. Let this mercy for which we have so great reason to be thankful, convince us that God tempts us not to evil, but rather in our temptations moves us to good.

And further we are here taught to be careful how we give utterance to any such objections. We are to be "swift to hear, slow to speak," ready to listen to instruction, and backward in raising difficulties. Least of all are we to press such matters in the spirit of contention, or to discuss them amongst each other in angry controversy. "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." On the contrary, it is with meekness that we must both receive and recommend the truth of the Gospel; that word which as a fertile graft upon a wild and barren stock, bears the most precious of all fruit, the salvation of the soul.

Instead of all such wranglings, we here learn that the right way to hold the truth in religion is to be doers of the word and not mere hearers, nor, as we might add, mere speakers. Else we profit no more by what we hear than if we heard not at all. It makes no more impression on us in reality than a man's beholding his face in a glass. We see the image both of what we are and of what we ought to be. But how useless is the sight, if we go the way of our own will, instead of the way of God's commandments; and straightway forget what we beheld in the mirror of his word! Such speculations are not religion. Such talking of religion is not religion. It is no more than deceiving our own selves. Religion is to do what we know. It is to believe what in God's word we read, what out of it we hear. It is both to look into the law of liberty, and to continue therein. It is to bridle the tongue, to relieve the afflicted, and to keep ourselves uncorrupted by the world in which we live. It is to do, and to be blessed in our deed. It is to be what God would have us to be. And it is to enjoy what He has prepared for us to enjoy.

That the rich may not despise the poor.

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your [†] assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that wearcth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here ^{||} in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of * the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

[†] Gr. *synagogue*.

^{||} Or, *well, or, seemly*.

* Or, *that*.

[‡] Or, *that law which said*.

[¶] Or, *glorieth*.

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point* he is guilty of all.

11 [‡] For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy [¶] rejoiceth against judgment.

§ 646. *How we shall be judged by the law of liberty.*

That true religion consists not in profession but in practice, is here further argued by St. James. For as our faith would be vain if it lead us not to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, so it is deficient if we hold it "with respect of persons," if we exercise that love which should come of faith, more towards one class of persons than another. Particularly is this urged in a matter not uncommon at present, but which we should hardly have expected to hear of as occurring in the primitive congregations: the haughty behaviour of the rich towards the poor, a haughtiness often manifested by the poor also towards those who are some little poorer than themselves. "Hearken, my beloved brethren." This address shews how earnestly the apostle desires to engage our attention to the remark he has to make. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" This was particularly observable at the time when St. James wrote. For at the first it was chiefly from among the poor that there were likely to be converts to the Gospel. And though God has since chosen many rich as well as poor, yet if He has chosen many poor, this is ample reason why the poor should be respected by the rich. Let not us then be partial, and form evil judgments. Let us respect those whom God respects. Let us choose those whom God has chosen. And these are they that honour Him, whether they be rich or poor. "Them that honour me I will honour." 1 Sam. 2. 30. To them that honour God let us give the first place in our esteem and love, and if they would receive it, the place of honour every where.

The rich and powerful, in the time of St. James, were forward in persecuting the professors of the truth. This was another reason why the rich among Christians should have had no undue preference in their congregations. The sins to which riches minister, the pride and daring to which they often lead, should be an argument with us to entertain no undue partiality towards those who have them. We must love our neighbour, whether rich or poor, as ourselves. We must love our neighbour without reference to whether he be poor or rich. For if we were to do right in all things else, and yet transgress wilfully in this, we should transgress against the known will of God, we should be guilty of transgressing against all God's law. And this is the case in any other instance. Wilfully to murder, or wilfully to hate, which in the heart is murder, convicts us of transgressing the law, though we be not at the same time guilty of adultery. And this shews us how religion consists in the practice of the heart. For it consists not in the doing any one or more things outwardly, but in such a devout disposition of the heart as makes us to do all things faithfully.

We must act then in every thing under a lively apprehension of the future judgment. We must speak, and do, yea and think also, as they who will be "judged by the law of liberty," by the Gospel, which whilst it makes us free, also makes us answerable for our use of freedom. For even under the Gospel, "he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." He who has despised or oppressed his poorer fellow servant, shall be delivered to the tormentors till he has paid what he never can pay, the uttermost farthing. See Matt. 18. 34. And also "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Mercy shewn to others, shall help us to "have boldness in the day of judgment." 1 John 4. 17. He that has been tenderhearted towards his brethren, shall experience in that day the truth of what is written: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Matt. 5. 7.

That faith without works is dead.

14 What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, † being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith || without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 * Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, † Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man[†] is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

26 For as the body without the † spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

† Gr. *by itself*.

|| Some copies read, *by thy works*.

* Or, *Thou seest*.

† Gen. 15. 6. Rom. 4. 3. Gal. 3. 6.

† Or, *breath*.

§ 647. *The fruit of a lively faith.*

How closely does error follow after in the progress of truth! How early in the Christian community was introduced this false and fatal notion, that faith might profit though unfruitful of good works! St. James had been pointing out that judgment is to be expected under the Gospel, no less than under the Law. See ver. 12, 13. Here he shews the folly of thinking to stand safe in that day by dint of an unfruitful faith. Such faith is properly no faith at all. It is not what is commonly meant when faith is mentioned in the Scriptures. It is little else than the profession of faith without feeling it. For this it is, which is most like saying to one who is in want, "Be ye warmed and filled," without giving him those things which are needful to the body. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." It is dead. It has no life, no activity. It does nothing. It does not justify. A man might as well say that he has works without faith, as that he has faith without works. It would be as easy, if not easier, to shew works without faith, and hence to argue that faith is implied; as to shew faith without works, and hence to suppose that works may be dispensed with. But besides the mere profession of faith, there is also meant in this place the conviction of the mind, that the Gospel cannot be disproved, or at least the utter inability to disprove it. This is such faith as the devils have, which "believe and tremble." Men also there are who wish that they could see their way to unbelief, but cannot. They had rather not believe, if they could help it. But the evidence is so strong that they know not how to gainsay it. They do so as far as they can. They would do so further if they could, if they durst. They have no joy and peace, but only fear and trembling, in believing. They believe that they must die, but they long to live. They believe that there is after death the judgment, but they fear to meet the Judge. They believe that Christ died to save sinners; but inasmuch as they have not had faith in their own redemption, inasmuch as they have not applied the promises to themselves, they are aware that they have only so much the more to answer for, in neglecting so great salvation.

Now that faith, in any sense of the word, without works is dead, the apostle shews by setting forth what were generally acknowledged for cases of lively faith, the faith of Abraham and the faith of Rahab. Both these persons, as was also argued in the Epistle to the Hebrews, see ch. 11. 17, 31, proved their faith by their works. In them, and in others like to them, faith wrought with their works, and "by works was faith made perfect." Faith is not complete faith without works. If we believe in earnest, we shall in earnest work, because we believe. If we work in earnest, our works, through the grace of God, will tend to advance us in believing. And this is because our belief depends, more than we are aware, upon the inclination of our hearts. We are apt to reason for ourselves, and to view the testimony of others, according to what we wish to be true. What we are averse to do, we are not easily persuaded to believe. Whatsoever then our present measure of faith demands of us, let us at once make haste to put it in practice. Whatever sacrifice we believe we ought to offer, let us offer. Whatever service to God we believe we ought to do, let us do. Else is our faith no more alive than "the body without the spirit." And if our faith be dead, we, let us remember, we are dead also. Only by good works can our faith be proved to be alive. Only by a lively faith can we be justified before God, through the atoning blood of Christ.

Of bridling the tongue.

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater || condemnation.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

|| Or, judgment.

* Or, wood.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great * a matter a little fire kindleth !

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity : so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every † kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of ‡ mankind :

8 But the tongue can no man tame ; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

† Gr. nature.

‡ Gr. nature of man.

§ 648. *The tongue subject to God's grace.*

We have seen how we ought to rejoice in being tempted, if thereby we may find occasion to grow in faith. See ch. 1. 2—4. We have seen that we must prove our faith by our good works, that we must overcome when we are tempted, if we would obtain the crown of life. Let us therefore mark what evil works are here forbidden, what good works are especially here commended. "My brethren, be not many masters." Let us not be apt to set up for ruling and teaching. Let us be content rather to be subject to each other, to learn of each other. Let us be aware, that if we are forward to reprove our brethren, we shall ourselves "receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all." We have all more than enough to answer for of our own. We all offend ; and all "in many things." How dare we then be so eager to find fault with one another, when we are so liable to the judgments of God ? How dare we be so anxious to lord it over our brethren, when we are such unprofitable servants ourselves ?

Amongst our numerous offences, there are none to which we are more frequently tempted, than those of the tongue. And perhaps it is because we are apt to think too lightly of them, as well as because it is so important to avoid them, that the apostle thus strongly insists upon their enormity. For words, though in one sense, they are not actions, both inflict as great an injury on our neighbours, and argue, if they be wicked, no less wickedness in ourselves. So that they are here compared to bits, by which when put into horses' mouths, we guide and govern their whole bodies, and also to helms which direct the courses of the largest ships ; as being things which are small in themselves, but most important in their effects. And in like manner they are compared to a little fire, which is sufficient to kindle one ever so large ; a single spark being the beginning, though the burning of a forest may be the end. And here we learn how the tongue is itself first set on fire. "It is set on fire of hell." It is Satan who tempts us to those idle words which no passion would else constrain us to utter. And thus it is that the tongue is so ungovernable, more so than the most wild of animals : and at the same time also so full of poison, more so than the most venomous of serpents.

But God can heal what man cannot. God can tame what man cannot. For the poison He has provided also the antidote. All the beasts of the forest are under his orders. The fire, and the spark that kindles it ; the ship, the fierce winds by which it is driven, and the helm which directs its course ; the horse, and his rider, and the bit by means of which he rides ; are all subject to the controul of Him, who made and governs all. Let us then apply to Him for help that we may guide and rule the tongue. Let us apply to Him for help that we "offend not in word." Let us watch, by his grace, every word we utter, that we utter it neither in vanity nor pride, neither in anger, jealousy, nor revenge. Let us pray that we may have grace to tame this unruly member. Let us tame it by often using it in prayer. Let us employ it, when thus brought under controul, in godly uses. Let us exercise it in edifying conversation. Let it be strong to testify to the truth of God's Gospel. Let it be swift to speak his praise, or to sing songs unto his name. Let it rejoice in ever carrying the tidings of salvation, not only from one to another in this Christian land, but from this land to all others, yea even unto the ends of the earth. Happy is he whose tongue is thus properly controuled, thus profitably employed ! Able is such an one also to bridle the whole body. He that can do the more difficult, can do the more easy. Without God's help we can do neither. With God's help we can do both. Without the grace of the Holy Ghost we can do nothing. With the grace of the Holy Ghost we can do every thing.

May God give us grace to tame the tongue, and also to bridle the whole body ! May God grant that whatsoever we say or do may be to his glory through Jesus Christ.

The inconsistency of the tongue.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same || place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

13 Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation

his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, * sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is † confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, ‡ without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

|| Or, hole.

* Or, natural.

† Gr. tumult, or, unquietness.

‡ Or, without wrangling.

§ 649. *The tongue guided by the heart.*

St. James wishing further to awaken our attention to the sins of the tongue, here points out its grievous inconsistency. "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." Such at least is the practice of many men, to curse one while with the same lips, with which at another time they worship God. And must not every one of us be sensible, that our own lips, though they never, it may be, are heard to curse, yet oftentimes use language most inconsistent with the utterance of prayer and praise? When next we are tempted thus to abuse the gift of speech, when next we are about to utter angry or malicious expressions, proud, or unkind, or deceitful, or merely idle words, let us think of the consideration here insisted on. Let us reflect thus within ourselves: These lips which would now fain speak evil, how lately have they said prayers to God; how soon will they again make supplication unto Him, how soon again set forth his praise! No one spring sends forth two sorts of water. No one plant bears two sorts of fruit. Only the inconsistent mouth of man gives vent both to blessing and to cursing. Only our inconsistent hearts send forth from the same place, what is good "to the use of edifying," and also corrupt communication. Far be it from us to make our prayers unwelcome, by the vanity of our speech between whiles! Far be it from us to make our praises offensive unto God, by the ill temper of our ordinary discourse among men!

Who then "is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." This is to be our rule. Our conduct, and not only our lips, must give proof of heavenly wisdom. For herein there must be no pretence, no acting of a part, no hypocrisy. And therefore holy speaking of necessity implies holy living. The life, yea the heart also, must be upright, honest, sincere, full of purity, and truth, and love; before the tongue can with propriety express these feelings. This it is which keeps back most of us from talking as we would wish on the things of heaven; we are conscious that our hearts still linger upon earth; we feel that we should not be talking honestly, we fear lest we should disgrace our words by our behaviour. And this it is which makes godly talking to be not only so scarce, but so eminent an attainment; it cannot be really godly, without a godly life, here called "a good conversation."

And especially there must shine forth in our behaviour, what can least of all be there unless it be in the heart; this quality of meekness, or as the apostle here calls it, "meekness of wisdom." And this is as if he would assure us, that gentleness and forbearance are not, as men are apt to fancy, the sign of weakness and folly, but the token of true wisdom, of that wisdom which "is from above." Whilst on the other hand, a contentious spirit, an unforgiving spirit, a spirit that is resolved always to have the advantage in dealing, the victory in contention, the last word in an argument, the first place in the esteem of the beholders, this is the spirit which "descendeth not from above," this if it be any wisdom at all, is such as is "earthly, sensual, devilish." Thus closely is this duty in our behaviour connected with that which is the chief duty of the heart, the love which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," which "suffereth long, and is kind." 1 Cor. 13. 4. Charity in the heart, and charity alone, can insure meekness of wisdom in the life. Charity in the heart, and charity alone, can make us in our behaviour to be "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And only from such conversation as this, and therefore only from charity in the heart, can we hope to reap that "fruit of righteousness," which "is sown in peace of them that make peace," and which is reaped in peace for evermore, through Him who has made our peace with God. He it is who is the Prince of Peace. Isa. 9. 6. He it is who has told us, and may we never forget his words: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Matt. 5. 9.

Against pride and contention.

1 From whence *come* wars and || fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your *lusts that war in your members?

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your †lusts.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The

|| Or, *brawlings*.

* Or, *pleasures*.

† Or, *pleasures*.

‡ Or, *enviously*.

1 Prov. 3. 34. 1 Pet. 5. 5.

spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth ‡ to envy?

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

§ 650. *Humility before God.*

As angry and contentious words are among the chief sins of the tongue, so wars and fightings are among the most sinful of our actions. It is therefore needful for us to know whence these wrarrings and contentions come; that we may be the better on our guard to avoid them. It is even of our lusts that war in our members; these are the source of all the evil desires which we cherish; the coveting what is not fit for us to have, the coveting what belongs to one another. When thus we covet we are apt to speak arrogantly, apt to act contentiously. Nay we are also apt to ask selfishly, we are apt to pray wrongfully. The spirit of strife and covetousness intrudes into our very prayers. We ask for things which we could not have without detriment to each other, or injury to our own souls. We ask for what we wish to consume upon our lusts, to employ in gratifying our pride, or selfishness, or sensuality.

Those who pray in this spirit are here addressed by St. James as "adulterers and adulteresses," and are warned that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." For this is spiritual adultery, when we are bound by every tie to God in Christ, when we are wedded to our Lord as members of his church, then to desert the love of Him for the love of the wicked world, then to set our affections not on heaven but on earth, this is to be unfaithful, this is to commit adultery in the soul. And not without the utmost peril is such sin committed. In many places has the Scripture testified against all such wilful thoughts, all such evil desires. Whereas to those who resist them, to those who set their hearts on God, "He giveth more grace," even unto them who in humility of mind are faithful to their heavenly Lord. "Submit yourselves therefore to God." Contend not for your own will either in your words or in your works. Remember "God resisteth the proud;" you fight against Him who is almighty. Contend not against God. Contend not against each other. Consider every temptation to pride, anger, selfishness, or revenge, as the suggestion of the devil. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." In this and in all things else he is the very opposite of God. Exercise against this worst of enemies the steadfast resolution which you are apt to shew in striving against God, the courage and perseverance and strength which you often spend in fighting with your brethren. God, when resisted, resists to your destruction. Satan, when thus encountered, ~~meets~~ and yields, and ceases to torment. Here success is certain. Here you may be sure of victory. Here you may war and yet be peaceable; fight, and yet not cherish the lusts warring in your members. You gain, and yet your brethren lose not. You conquer, and they share in your eternal triumph.

But it is not in your own strength that you must fight with Satan. You must conduct the combat in the spirit of prayer. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Apply to Him for help. Make Him your friend. Humble yourself in his sight. "Cleanse your hands," whatsoever you have done wrong, and there is "no man that sinneth not." 1 Kings 8. 46. Purify your heart, whatsoever you have thought amiss. And where is the heart which is perfect before God? Where is the mind which is singly fixed upon the doing of his will? "Let your laughter," in whatsoever you have laughed sinfully, "be turned into mourning; and your joy, where it has been worldly, carnal, selfish, be changed "to heaviness." Thus humble yourself "in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." If fallen, He will raise you anew; and when you stand, He will hinder you from falling. When you feel yourselves to be lowest, He will make you highest. He will lift you up above worldly cares, above proud thoughts, above selfish wishes, above sensual desires. He will lift you up above pride, envy, jealousy, above friendship with the world unto friendship with Himself. Yes, we may be friends with God. Christ has reconciled us. He has given us access through the Spirit unto the Father. See Eph. 2. 18. He has set us in heavenly places, see Eph. 2. 6, admitted us to be citizens of "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11. 10. What would we wish for higher than to be lifted up to heaven? What would we aim at loftier than to "ever be with the Lord?" 1 Thess. 4. 17.

Against other sins of the tongue.

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

13 'Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? || It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

¹ Prov. 27.1.

|| Or, For it is.

§ 651. *The sinfulness of not doing what we know.*

More sins of the tongue are here set forth, especially speaking evil of each other, and also speaking of the future without sufficiently reflecting that we "know not what shall be on the morrow." And these sins the apostle seems particularly to point out to the attention of those amongst his readers, who are the most advanced in faith and piety. For whereas in the exhortations which went before he said, "Ye sinners," and again, "Ye double-minded," ver. 8, he here says, "speak not evil one of another, brethren." Ye then who dwell together as brethren, ye who love one another for the sake of Christ your Lord, watch that ye speak no evil of each other, watch that ye speak no evil wilfully of any man. For see to what this speaking evil of each other amounts; it is no less than speaking evil of the law, and judging the law. It is judging that which it is our business to obey. It is taking to ourselves the part of judge. It is judging the law, inasmuch as it is interpreting it, applying it in passing sentence upon others, whilst we ought only to apply it in passing sentence against ourselves. And further it is judging the law, inasmuch as it is finding fault with the law. The law by which we Christians are bound has forbidden us to speak evil against each other. But they who delight in censure defend themselves by saying that they cannot help judging, cannot help condemning, that they must be allowed to find fault with each other, or they might as well not talk at all. And this is a sin against which the more advanced of Christians had need be especially on their guard, for this reason, that the better they do themselves, they will the more clearly see, and will be the more tempted by Satan to condemn, the faults of them who do most amiss.

Another sin against which we must all watch most diligently, is the speaking without sufficient reference to the overruling providence of God. "To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." This is the way in which men commonly discourse, even many who know better than to imagine that these things depend only on their own determination. We ought, however, all of us to think within ourselves, every time we form any purpose for the morrow of this world, we ought to think that it is not impossible, that we may not continue thus long to be on earth at all. We ought to remember that our life here "is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." We ought to be looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, see 2 Pet. 3. 12, the only sure tomorrow, whose sun will never set. And the nearer we approach in our faith and conduct to the Christian rule and pattern, we ought the more readily to express these convictions in our speech, we ought the more often to remark, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." For such a manner of speaking most becomes those who in other things are best, who live most according to such words as these. And besides, as they are acquainted with the will of the Lord, they have the most to answer for if they neglect to do it.

To know to do good, and yet not to do it, this beyond all dispute is sin. How manifest then is the sin of Christians who are familiar with these directions of St. James, and yet who never once in all their lives use any such expressions as "If the Lord will!" How doubly sinful is their sin, if they rejoice in their boastings, if they glory in speaking positively of their plans, if they pride themselves on being secure of success, by dint of their own wisdom, or strength, or union! "All such rejoicing is evil." All such rejoicing is little else than glorying in their shame. For is it not our disgrace to be blind to the overruling providence of God? Is it not our deep disgrace to see it, and know of it, but to refuse to own it? What can we expect to receive at the hands of Him whom we thus deny, except that He will also deny us? Oh let us then make haste to own his power, let us glory in acknowledging our dependence on his will. Let us feel that without his leave we can do nothing. Let us feel that we can do every thing if the Lord permit. And let us be in the habit of looking to Him for permission and assistance, in all that we do and say and think; knowing that He, and He alone, can make all things work together for our good.

The vanity and perils of wealth.

1 Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*.

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

|| Or, *Be long patient, or, suffer with long patience.*

7 || Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 † Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

† Or, *Groan, or, grieve not.*

§ 652. *The advantages of patient submission.*

The last thing urged upon us in the preceding chapter, is the expression of our dependence upon the providence of God. And in order to express this properly, we must feel it deeply. Now there is nothing so apt as ample wealth to beget in us a vain trust in this present world, and a forgetfulness of what is continually going on around us in the world which is unseen. Here therefore St. James impresses on us the vanity of riches; and the perils to which they expose us. How soon these things, in which we glory, moulder and decay! Riches consisting oftentimes of perishable goods, how soon are they corrupted! Garments, of which great store used to form a chief part of wealth, how often when thus laid up are they the food of moths! Gold and silver, the most precious metals, the universal token, and means of wealth, these too are liable to be cankered! So impossible is it for any thing we can amass on earth to last for our continual enjoyment, even if we ourselves could last to enjoy it!

But next observe how fearful is the responsibility of those who, possessing wealth, use it wrongfully. The rust of their money, if they hoard it selfishly, shall eat their flesh "as it were fire." The mere possession of what they ought long ago to have spent or given, shall be a witness against them at the bar of judgment. In thus treasuring up unprofitable riches, they do but treasure up ~~themselves~~ "wrath against the day of wrath." Rom. 2. 5. Or if further they have taken advantage of their labourers, if they have gained by oppression as well as hoarded in avarice, or if instead of hoarding, they have spent in wanton luxury and pleasurable sin; then behold the cries of those whom they have wronged are heard by Almighty God, and the more abundantly they have here enjoyed themselves to the loss of their fellow-creatures, the more large is their punishment hereafter.

Now it is the character of the just that he does not resist oppression. He submits rather than contend. He submits, as did that only really Just One, who was led "as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Is. 53. 7. It is true that ~~he~~ more we submit, the oppressor takes the more advantage. But this advantage is his loss and our gain. And it may be that by our submission we may gain him also; we may convince him that it is more blessed to suffer than to wrong. For so has Christ set us the example. And so does the apostle here exhort us, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." When oppressed, we are to wait for the day of judgment, as husbandmen for the harvest. We must spare no loss, no cost, for the present; which may help us towards fruit for the future. We must not grudge or envy those who fare better than ourselves. Least of all must we covet the prosperity of the wicked. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." This is enough to stablish our hearts in patience. "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." This may further serve to make us loathe the advantages of iniquity.

And especially we are to take for our encouragement the example of those "who have spoken in the name of the Lord," and who have endured many and grievous things for the Lord's sake. Such were those of whom we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, who "were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." Heb. 11. 37. Such also was Job; in whose history we have this advantage, that it tells us how well he fared in the end, it shews us how all the time we suffer, God is reserving in his mercy the best till the last. How happy do we count Job, as we dwell on what befel him! How do our hearts burn within us as we ponder on the sufferings, the consolations, and the exceeding great reward, of those holy men of old who persevered unto the end! Why should we not now rejoice to share their sorrows, if we hope to attain unto their joys? How can we think of murmuring under the like burden of affliction, when we reckon on wearing the same crown of glory?

How to use the tongue profitably.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray

one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed || earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

|| Or, in his prayer.

§ 653. *The effect of mutual prayers.*

St. James concludes his Epistle with pressing on us that which he has all along kept in view, the importance of a right government of the tongue. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not." "Above all things," for this sin is most wanton. "Above all things," for it is therefore most offensive. It has no natural temptation urging it. It is the most absolute and obvious device of the enemy of souls. It is the most daring and inexcusable transgression of the revealed will of God our Saviour. Make then no approach whatever to any such practice as swearing. Swear not by any oath whatever. Let your words be always true, and they will need no such confirmation. Let them never be thus confirmed; or you transgress, and are exposed to punishment.

Rather use the tongue continually in the holy exercises of prayer and praise. In your affliction, instead of taking God's name in vain, pray to Him in earnest. In your joy, instead of making light of his majesty, sing psalms to his glory. In sickness invite others to pray with you, such as are advanced at once in age and piety. To these there was often imparted in primitive times the power of working miracles. For a sign they used to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. And having the faith to work the miracle, they by their prayers could prevail with the Lord to raise up the sick, and to forgive his sins. Though at present we experience no such marvellous healings of the body, let us still call in each other's aid in the diseases of the soul. Let us confess our faults "one to another," with a view to secure the help of each other's prayers. Let us "pray one for another," in the full assurance of faith that we can help each other by thus praying. It is as true at the present moment as it ever was, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." What speed ought this one thought to give to us in following after righteousness, that our prayers may thus become more profitable for our brethren! With what freedom ought it to inspire us in confessing our faults to each other, that we might thus be more particularly prayed for by the righteous! Far be it from us always to justify ourselves! Far be it from us always to study how we may best conceal our faults from our brethren! How much nearer unto heavenly healing is an humble and sincere confession! How earnestly ought we to desire to be prayed for by our brethren! How heartily ought we to pray for them!

And what encouragement for these holy uses of the tongue is set forth in the two particulars following; the success of Elijah in his prayers, and the fruit which may attend our own in the conversion of sinners! The first shews us how much the fervent prayer of faith avails. The second tells us how much we may hope to do by our praying, as well as by the diligent use of edifying words, towards saving the souls of our brethren. And it is by the tongue that we may greatly influence them for good. Words are our chief means of conveying to each other our own several convictions. Words serve for the chief utterance of our requests to God. Would we then promote the manifestation of God's glory upon the earth, by abundance of grace, like rain after a drought, shed abroad after a long season of spiritual barrenness? Let us pray fervently that God's kingdom come. Let us intercede very frequently and very heartily with Him, that it would please Him to make known his ways upon earth, his saving health unto all nations. Would we save a soul from death, would we hide in our erring brethren the multitude of their sins? Let us endeavour always so to speak as to edify the hearers. Let us in our words shew continually our own most serious impression of divine things. Let us in our words make manifest as far as possible our faith and charity, our hope, and peace, and joy in believing. And let us in our prayers make frequent mention of such as err from the truth, especially if they have confessed their faults to us with this view, begging of God that He will hear their prayers, turn their hearts, and save their souls; and giving thanks to God that He counts us worthy of the honour of helping them forward in the way of salvation.

May God hear our prayers for our brethren! May God give us grace for ourselves, that no corrupt communication ever proceed out of our mouths; but only that which may serve to edify our neighbour, and glorify his holy name. To Him be all honour and glory, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER. 1. 1, 2.

St. Peter's salutation.

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.
2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God

§ 654. *Our election.*

St. Peter addresses his Epistle "to the strangers scattered throughout" various places which he names, probably meaning the Jewish converts, who had been driven abroad into those parts by the persecutions at Jerusalem. And he calls them "strangers," both because they were by these means torn from their own homes, and also in order to signify to them and to us, that it is well to count ourselves for strangers upon the earth. For this Epistle is not addressed only to the scattered Israelites, nor only to the Gentile converts amongst whom they lived, but to all Christians in all lands, and in all times. All we as Christians are "scattered," dispersed amongst the rest of mankind, few amongst many. We have no abiding place on earth, but seek a better country, that is, an heavenly. See Heb. 11. 16. Oh that God may give us grace to set our faces thitherward in earnest!

For this end it will be most profitable for us to look upon ourselves as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." That is to say, we have all been chosen to be Christians, chosen to be members of Christ; all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, however exclusively the Jews might suppose themselves to be elected, chosen to be children of God; chosen to be heirs of heaven, according to the purpose of Him, who knows all things, whose will is in all things supreme. We have all been chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit," appointed to be made meet for heaven by being made holy upon earth, through the power of the Holy Ghost. We have all been chosen "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," set apart to be a peculiar people zealous of good works, out of our sense of God's mercy in cleansing us by the atoning blood of our Saviour. Could we but thus think of our privileges, how could we bear for one moment to lose sight of them? Could we but thus esteem ourselves devoted by God's own purpose to holiness and heaven, how could we so abase ourselves as to sin, how so sin as to fall away unto perdition? We are heirs of glory. Heaven is ours. God has appointed it. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we are to be admitted into the full enjoyment of never ending happiness. What can give us peace, if this will not suffice? What is grace, and favour, and inestimable bounty, if not this? Oh that God who has begun in us this good work may make it perfect! Oh that God who at the first has chosen us, may so multiply unto us his grace and peace, as to bring us to glory in the end, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

God to be blessed for his gracious gift.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his || abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven † for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though

now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

|| Gr. much.

† Or, for us.

§ 655. *How prophets and also angels have longed to know the Gospel.*

What a blessing it is to know God as He is, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" What a privilege to have been begotten again, "according to his abundant mercy," "unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" We are no longer overpowered with dismay, at the thought of meeting God face to face. He is the Father of our Saviour. He loved us so greatly that He gave his Son to die for our salvation. We are no longer disheartened at the prospect of losing, when we die, all we have loved on earth. We have a hope of better things. Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep. As He rose again from the dead, so shall we also arise "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for us. And to this we are born anew, begotten anew. And it is God's doing. It is God who has anew begotten us. It is God who reserves for us this inheritance in heaven. It is by the power of God that we are kept, as in a place of security "through faith unto salvation," which salvation is "ready to be revealed in the last time." Let us therefore think of it as being in readiness to be manifested. Let us esteem ourselves as being in safety, secure of enjoying it; secure, if we believe; secure, if our faith work by love; secure as in a fortress from the assaults of all our enemies. For "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Prov. 18. 10.

Having then a hope so full of glory, how is it that we hesitate to rejoice? Surely we do not hope in earnest. Surely if we are not always rejoicing, we do not in earnest believe. Can it be that a few trials depress the spirits of a Christian for any continuance? Can it be that with all which God has promised as secure as his word is true, we can for any length of time be in heaviness, because we are not at once exempt from suffering? The trial of our faith, let us remember, like the trying of gold or of any other precious metal, is designed to prove its excellency. That which is tried in the fire, however pure, perishes at last. That which is tried in the furnace of affliction, our faith, instead of perishing, is "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." If we love Him now, though we see Him not; if out of our belief in Him, whilst for the present He is not seen, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; we shall receive "the end of our faith, even the salvation" of our souls, we shall find that our faith, which has been thus tried, ends in eternal joy.

Of this salvation the prophets of old time used to enquire and search diligently; even they who by the direction of the Holy Ghost spake beforehand of this great grace of God, whereof we are partakers. They were not content merely to convey these intimations to mankind. They were most anxious to understand what they were directed to reveal. Though they knew that "not unto themselves but unto us they did minister," or announce as God's ministers, the things which were afterwards preached by the apostles, and confirmed with mighty signs and wonders, yet they were very anxious to know beforehand what was about to happen, at what time, and in what kind of season Christ should suffer, and his church be glorified. Nay not prophets only are anxious, but angels also stoop down from heaven, to look into the mysteries of the Gospel. And shall we neglect to search? Shall we be indifferent to know? Shall we dare to be ignorant, when we have so graciously been taught? Oh, shame to our ungrateful hearts, that we love so little, where we have been loved so much! Oh, blessing, and honour, and glory be to God; that He still bears with our perversity, still reserves for us, if at length we will believe, the salvation of our souls!

Motives to fear and to love.

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope || to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, ¹ Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

|| Gr. perfectly.

¹ Lev. 11. 44. & 19. 2. & 20. 7.

† Or, For that.

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 † For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

* § 656. *How we are begotten anew by the word of God.*

To gird up the loins was necessary for those who usually wore long and flowing garments, if they would prepare themselves for any exertion of strength or speed. Let us then gird up the loins of our minds. Let us exert all the strength and speed of our understandings, that we may apprehend clearly, quickly, forcibly, the whole counsel of God for our salvation. Let us be sober, soberminded, forming no ungrounded expectations; yet at the same time hoping to the uttermost all that God has given us ground to hope for, even the grace or great gift of glory that is to be brought unto us, when our Lord shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation. See Heb. 9. 28. And having this hope thus cherished in us, let us live according to it, let us obey God as his children; not living in the lusts we used to live in before our minds were enlivened and enlightened; but as He who has called us is holy, so let us be "holy in all manner of conversation." For to no less than this has He exhorted us; to be holy as He is holy; to be perfect as He is perfect. See Matt. 5. 48. Let us therefore aim at no less than this. Let us never wilfully do any one thing, less according to God's will, than at the time we might or could do. Let us never wilfully think a single thought, nor speak a single word, more offensive than we can help, to his perfect purity, more unworthy of his perfect love.

We call on God as our Father. We have access unto Him as sons. We are encouraged by his loving kindness to draw near to Him, to become like unto Him. But at the same time, for our further security, we are reminded of how sore punishment awaits us if we resist his will, how surely He will judge "without respect of persons," "according to every man's work;" we are taught to perfect holiness in the fear of God. See 2 Cor. 7. 1. Thus with the love of God we must unite the fear of offending Him. We must fear Him and love Him at the same time. Let our fear therefore arise from our sense of his goodness, from the consideration of his grace in redeeming us, from the thought of what a sacrifice He consented to make in order to win us from our vain conversation and abominable sins. Yes, it was "the precious blood of Christ," that spotless Lamb, who was indeed "foreordained before the foundation of the world," but has in these last times been manifested for us, this it was that God gave for us, this it was that God received as a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement. Let us therefore "believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory." Let us believe so as to fear. Let us fear so as at the same time to hope and also to love.

And let us observe that one chief fruit and token of our love to God is this, that we love the brethren. It is unto this that we have purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. It is unto this that we are born again, by the word of God, that incorruptible seed, "which liveth and abideth for ever." The blood of our fathers according to the flesh, now flowing in our veins, must cease to flow, must turn to corruption. The new principle of life infused into our hearts by the word of the Gospel, this never dies. Never, as long as that word is within us, never shall we cease to love one another, never shall we cease to love our Lord. The grass must wither, and the flower fall away. The flesh must moulder in decay, and the glory of man be utterly forgotten. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever." That in us which quickens, quickens everlastingly. That in us which is quickened, dies no more. We die not, but we sleep in Jesus. See 1 Thess. 4. 14. We die not, but we depart, to be with Christ where He is. See Phil. 1. 23. We never cease to live. We never cease to love.

God give us this new and endless life! God grant, that we may live in love, henceforth for ever!

Christ the chief corner stone.

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* † precious: but unto them which be disobedient, † the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head

of the corner,

8 † And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, † a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the *praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 † Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, † whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

‡ Or, be ye built.

† 1s. 28. 16.

† Or, an honour.

† Ps. 118. 22. Matt. 21. 42. Acts 4. 11.

† 1s. 8. 14.

‡ Or, a purchased people.

* Or, virtues.

† Hos. 2. 23

‡ Or, wherein.

§ 657. *How we might reply to temptation.*

How many striking figures are here forcibly set forth, in order to help us in understanding the value of our privileges, and to move us to undertake in earnest the discharge of our duties! We are to "desire the sincere milk of the word," "as newborn babes;" to love the Gospel and to delight in receiving it, as heartily, as much above all other things, as infants love their mother's milk. Having once tasted it, once found in it how gracious the Lord is, we must ever after cling to it, and feed upon it, in order that we "may grow thereby." We must come unto the Lord as unto a living stone, "a chief corner stone, elect, precious," the main stay, and connexion, and foundation of that living temple his church; wherein we also as lively stones must be "built up a spiritual house;" to be at once the temple and the priesthood, at once the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God, and the worshippers who therein "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Let us then remember that "the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." And when we think how our blessed Lord was rejected by the Jews, how "He came unto his own, and his own received him not," John 1. 11, let us beware lest He be to us also "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." Let us beware lest we "stumble at the word, being disobedient," and so be numbered with those who have been appointed to destruction. Rather let us regard our Lord as He is set forth to us in Scripture, "the head of the corner;" that which ties together all the rest of the building, that which is over the rest supreme. Let us endeavour to feel united unto Him as parts of the same building, ministering to the same use, the glory of God.

Or to dwell on the other figure, let us regard ourselves as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. As Aaron and his family were set apart from the other children of Israel, to offer sacrifices to the Lord, as the children of Israel were separated from the rest of mankind, to be united in covenant with Jehovah, so let all Christians glory in the thought, that God has chosen them to be his people, and his priests; his people, now admitted to share his mercy, though heretofore shut out from his covenant; his priests, "to shew forth the praises of him who hath called" us "out of darkness into his marvellous light." To Satan and to sinners, when they entice and tempt us, let us stedfastly make answer, I have now obtained mercy; I am holy unto the Lord. To sloth, and fear, and foolish shame, when they would tie our tongues from making mention of our Saviour's love, let us constantly and firmly reply, I am dedicated as a priest to offer spiritual sacrifice; it is my proper business not only to make my light shine before men, in a pure and holy life, but to make them glorify my Father which is in heaven by a heavenly and edifying communication.

And further we may add, whatsoever here would stay us from advancing in our heavenward journey, I am a stranger in the land. I have not the heart to enjoy the fleshly lusts, which are the custom of the place. My affections are far away at my Father's house. I am a pilgrim, on my journey to the heavenly Jerusalem; and these pleasures of which you invite me to partake, war against the soul. My great object is to pass safe as through an enemy's country. And it is my heart's desire to make known as I go along, the great goodness and glory of the God I serve. O ye who speak against us as evil doers, in vain do you also tempt us to ill behaviour! Behold our conversation, behold the good works, which through God's help, we are enabled to do and learn you also to glorify God, who "hath visited and redeemed his people." Luke 1. 68.

Instruction in our duties to each other.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

17 † Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is † acceptable with God.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered * for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but § committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body ¶ on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

‖ Gr. having.

† Or, Esteem.

‡ Or, thank.

* Or, Some read, for you.

§ Or, committed his cause.

¶ Or, to.

§ 658. *That we ought to be thankful if we with patience suffer wrongfully.*

From the mention of our being "strangers and pilgrims," St. Peter had been led to beseech us so to behave amongst surrounding unbelievers, as that they also might "glorify God." Ver. 12. Here he points out some few duties in particular, which at the time when he wrote this Epistle would be very helpful towards that end. The early Christians, especially the Jewish converts, were likely to think, that as Christ was their King, they were the less bound to obey their earthly rulers; and that as Christ had made them free, they were less obliged to fulfil their earthly service. And even if they were preserved from falling into this delusion, it was not unlikely to be laid to their charge, and to prove a scandal in the path of the unbelieving Gentiles. But we are here taught that "for the Lord's sake" we are to submit ourselves "to every ordinance of man." Our heavenly King will have us obey our earthly king. He who "judgeth according to every man's work," ch. 1. 17, requires us to be subject unto those who have authority on earth "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Thus therefore we "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." We are better subjects in proportion as we are better Christians. In proportion as we are really free through Christ, we use not our liberty as a plea for doing evil, but are so much the more obedient as servants of God. We give "honour to whom honour" is due, Rom. 13. 7, paying all due respect to all men. We love the brotherhood, loving all men as brethren. We "fear God," our King which is in heaven. And because we fear to displease Him, we "honour the king," his minister upon the earth. If we are servants, or even if slaves, for such were servants for the most part when these words were written, we are so much the more subject to our masters, with all reasonable fear: and that, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."

This is a most signal advantage which Christians have in the performance of all relative duties; they do right no less faithfully, though the rest do wrong. Nay, this is one more thing for which they give thanks to God, if for conscience sake towards Him they patiently "endure grief, suffering wrongfully." To be condemned when innocent, to be buffeted when not in fault, to suffer as evil doers when all the while we "do well," which is so great a grievance in the eyes of the worldly minded, of which they complain so loudly, against which they protest so vehemently, that is welcomed with thanks by the true disciple of Christ, for this, if it be not courted presumptuously, but "taken patiently," "this is acceptable unto God."

Yes, this is what Christ Himself endured; this is the example which He left us; in these steps of his we are all called to follow. He "did no sin" yet was treated as a malefactor. In his mouth no guile was found. And yet He was taken for an impostor. He, when He was thus reviled, "reviled not again." When He thus suffered wrongfully, He neither inflicted nor threatened retribution, but, with intercession in behalf of his oppressors, "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." He left it not for us to bear our own burdens. He turned from us those evils, which we most justly have deserved. He "his own self," in our stead, "bare our sins," even ours, "in his own body," even in his, on the cross. And all this He underwent for our gain; "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." So that by his stripes we are healed. We, who were sick have been made well. We, who ought to have suffered, have been forgiven. We, who were as sheep that have wandered from the fold, without food, at the mercy of the wolf, have been gathered in by his unwearied pains, redeemed by his undeserved love, and secured under his guardianship for ever.

God grant that we may follow where our Shepherd leads, and go whithersoever He calls us; though it be to do well and suffer for it, still to take it patiently, nay then most of all to suffer thankfully!

Duties of wives and husbands.

1 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection ~~to~~ your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorn-*
ing of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose † daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

† Gr. children.

‡ Or, loving to the brethren.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

8 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, ‡ love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

10 For † he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is ‡ against them that do evil.

† Ps. 34. 12, &c.

‡ Gr. upon.

§ 659. *God's favour to the righteous.*

At the first preaching of the Gospel, it was not unlikely to happen oftentimes, that husband or wife might be converted, the one without the other. Nay now also, when both parties profess to be Christians, how frequently is the one in earnest, and the other a hypocrite, the one a Christian indeed, and the other a mere professor! In case the wife be the sincere convert, what could be a more affecting motive, for her to put in practice the Christian duties of a wife, than the hope of helping to convert the husband? It is on this ground that St. Peter takes occasion to set forth what the Christian duties of a wife are. To be in subjection to her own husband, even though he "obey not the word," is one of the first and chief. "Chaste conversation coupled with fear," united with this respectful deference to the husband's wishes, is another. A third duty, here enforced, is not to have her adorning consist in outward ornaments, as in "plaiting the hair," and wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel, but in "a meek and quiet spirit," that ornament which never can wear out, and which, however little it may be esteemed on earth, "is in the sight of God of great price." This was the way in which the holy women of old adorned themselves. It was in this spirit that "Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." And as men must glory in being sons of the father of the faithful; so might women rejoice to think, that they are counted for daughters of one who "trusted in God," as long as, like her, they "do well," taking warning also from her fall not to be "afraid with any amazement." See Gen. 18. 15.

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge," behave to wives with a temper suitable to your greater opportunities of instruction. Prove that you know, by doing accordingly. If you are stronger, so much the more pay respect to the weaker. Live together as joint heirs "of the grace of life," of the free gift of life eternal. So live together in spiritual love, that you may cordially unite in prayer to God, that your prayers be never hindered by your disagreement.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind," not only husbands and wives, but all Christians, let all live in harmony with each other, "having compassion one of another," being ready to forgive, to forbear, to give assistance. "Be pitiful," feeling deeply each other's sorrows. "Be courteous," behaving kindly, speaking gently, tenderly, considerately. Neither return ill treatment with ill treatment, nor evil words with evil words; "but contrariwise blessing," finding always something kind to do, something pleasant to say; "knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing," remembering how God has to you returned good for evil, has in the midst of your disobedience bestowed on you salvation. Would you then enjoy his proffered

it with abhorrence. "Seek peace, and ensue it," follow after and cleave unto that which is good. If your prayers will be hindered. Else the face of the Lord is against you. If you do evil wilfully, if you speak harshly, act wrongfully, if when you have been made heirs of a blessing, you have the heart to prove a curse to your brethren, then behold God turns away from you the light of his countenance, nay He sets Himself in array against you. But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." This is the encouragement which we have in abhorring evil, in following after good. God looks upon us with favourable regard. God listens to our prayers, and delights to grant them. We see by faith the countenance of our Saviour looking on us with unspeakable love. We hear by faith his voice thus cheering us: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. 7. 7.

Of suffering for righteousness' sake.

13 And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and 'be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and || fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the

just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

1 Is. 8. 12, 13.

.. || Or, reverence.

§ 660. *Noah and the flood a type of Christ and Christian baptism.*

Godliness does in a very eminent degree confer advantage in this present life. And few are they who will purposely do us harm if we be in earnest "followers of that which is good." But if there be some, nay if there be many, who are disposed to injure us, we still are gainers by the hurt which they inflict. If we suffer for righteousness' sake, we are only so much the more happy. The enmity between the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman, is maintained by the animosity still manifest in the world, against believers in Christ. The children of Belial do really take delight in tormenting the brethren of the Lord. And as it fell out at the first preaching of the Gospel, that the disciples were mocked, scourged, imprisoned, and put to death, for Christ's sake, so it will now sometimes happen, that we are called upon to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.

In such a case the first thing we are concerned to do, is to "sanctify the Lord God" in our hearts; to reverence God so much the more devoutly, yea, to fear Him who alone can destroy both body and soul. See Matt. 10. 28. Next let us be ready, both prepared and willing, to declare to others the grounds of our religious convictions; "with meekness and fear," not proud of our own privileges, and yet deeply alarmed for their peril. Further let us see to it that we have a good conscience. Let us take care that we give no occasion by our misconduct for the adversaries of our faith to triumph. Let us endeavour rather to put them to shame by our good conversation in Christ; to convince others, and themselves, as far as possible, that they falsely accuse us of evil doing. And let us never forget, if God so order it that we suffer for well doing, how much better this is for us than that we should suffer for evil doing. For it is by this means that we approach unto the likeness of our Lord; seeing that He "once suffered for sins," though He did no sin Himself; and died on the cross, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

In the flesh our blessed Lord was "put to death," in the body which was prepared, and which He took upon Himself, on purpose that He might suffer instead of us who sinned. But by the Spirit He was quickened, by being the eternal Spirit He overcame death, He lives for evermore. It was He who by his Spirit preached of old unto the spirits of mankind, imprisoned in the flesh not willingly as his was, but of necessity; even to those who lived before the flood, and whom He called by means of Noah, that preacher of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ. See 2 Pct. 2. 5. Noah was a type of Christ, and the flood was a type of Christian baptism. Men were disobedient to God in the time of Noah. They are disobedient now. The longsuffering of God waited in his days, "while the ark was a preparing." It waits now, while the church is being made meet for heaven. In the ark few, that is, eight souls were then saved by means of water. The same water which destroyed the rest was the means of preserving Noah and his family. How few are in the ark of the church compared with the multitude who are in the deluge of the world! How many are washed in the flesh with the waters of baptism, who for want of "the answer of a good conscience toward God," will find it to increase their condemnation! How few, out of the many buried with Christ in baptism unto death, now rise again with Him to newness of life, or will hereafter be partakers of his kingdom in heaven!

O Lord, who hast now angels and authorities and powers subject unto Thee, grant that they may effectually minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation! Grant that we, by their help and comfort, under thy grace and guidance, may rise again with Thee in newness of life, and ascend in heart and mind to heaven where thou art!

Exhortations to cease from sin.

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

3 For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

6 For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged

according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity || shall cover the multitude of sins.

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

|| Or, *will*.

§ 661. *That we must soon render an account.*

Christ suffered even unto death. Let us arm ourselves with the thought that we are dead like Him, dead to the allurements of sin. And this is one chief use of our ordinary sufferings. They make us pause in our career; if it be a career of sinfulness. They benumb for a time our sense of worldly pleasures. They give us leisure to reflect on its vanity; and to turn ourselves to the search for better things. In imprisonment, and peril of death, or when smarting with unaffected grief under the loss of well beloved friends, how worthless even to the carnally minded seem "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries!" How worse than worthless, even hateful, loathsome, do such things as these appear, to those of us who have experienced grief for sin, who mourn for the dishonour done to God, by every wilful or heedless sinner! Armed with the mind that was in Jesus, we bear patiently and cheerfully the weight of our affliction. But whilst our hearts are aching for the folly of our fellow creatures, and the wounds which they inflict upon our Lord, we cannot endure to live the rest of our "time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Strange as our conduct must appear to the companions of our former foolishness, we plainly tell them that we abhor their "excess of riot," or their lukewarmness in devotion. And whatever evil they may speak of us, we go on our way rejoicing in hope, and also faithfully warning them to flee from the wrath to come.

They, and we, and all, must one day give account for all that we do here. We must give account as men who have been redeemed by Christ, and who might have borne, if they would, much fruit to his glory. He is "ready to judge the quick and the dead." For to them also who had died ere the apostle's time the Gospel, as he before observed, had been preached. See ch. 3. 19. And this both enabled them to live according to God in the spirit, and made them liable to be judged for what they had done in the flesh. Yes, the Gospel has been thus far preached to all men, by having been preached by Adam, and preached by Noah. For in case of such glad tidings of great joy, God must be considered to have amply done his part in revealing it to a few, seeing that these were straitly bound to make it known to all. How indeed can we believe it in earnest, and not diligently labour to communicate our faith? And how, if we labour not in this work of the Lord, how can we pretend that we believe in Him at all?

But whether we believe or no, whether or not we labour in the propagation of the Gospel, the truth of it is sure, Christ is "ready to judge," "the end of all things is at hand." What an extensive change is this single truth well fitted to work in the whole tenour of our lives! We are within a short distance of eternity. We are entrusted for a short time with our several talents; and we know not how soon we shall be summoned to the reckoning. We are stewards of all the things which we are here apt to call our own. And we are liable at any moment to receive this notice, "give an account of thy stewardship." Luke 16. 2. Who in such a case can bear to think of running riot in excess? Who would not rather be found watching and at prayer? And above all things let us have fervent charity among ourselves. Let us be as desirous to hide the trespasses of our brethren, as we are anxious to have our own forgiven. Let the measure of the blessings we receive of God, be the measure of what we desire to impart to our brethren. Whether it be in entertaining strangers, and relieving the needy, or in proclaiming the Gospel to the ignorant, and enforcing its importance on the careless and the gay, let us in all things seek to give as it has been given unto us, to love as we have ourselves been beloved. Let us in all things aim at this end above all others, that "God may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Comfort under apprehended persecution.

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you :

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you : on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other

men's matters.

16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God : and if *it* first begin at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God ?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?

19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

§ 662. *Judgment must begin at the house of God.*

In proportion to the great advantage of sufferings, if rightly used, is the anxiety here manifested by the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, the anxiety that we should rightly use them. We cannot indeed very easily imagine how fiery that trial was, how acute those pains, how fearful that persecution, by which the faith of the early Christians was very frequently put to proof. For ourselves, we find it hard even to be thought singular by our friends. We feel it grating to flesh and blood, to give up ever so little of our gain, ever so little of our comforts, ever so little of our earthly affections, for the sake of winning Christ for ever. What would have been our case, what would be now our conduct, if we must either suppress our convictions of the truth, or encounter the most virulent slander, the most cruel torture, loss of goods, imprisonment, banishment, or death ?

Yet even things like these we ought not to count for strange. We ought to be prepared in heart to bear them, if it should please God to let them come. We ought to be familiar with them, as often meditating on what our Lord endured, often longing that we might be privileged to share the burden of his cross. O Lord, we ought to pray sincerely, O Lord, let us be partakers of thy sufferings, that when thy glory shall be revealed we "may be glad also with exceeding joy." O Lord, we ought often thus to offer up our thanks ; O Lord, happy are we in being reproached for thy name. To Thee be all the praise, for "that spirit of glory and of God," which these reproaches thus borne make to rest upon us. To Thee be all the praise, that we are able thus to bear them ; that whilst on the part of others Thou art evil spoken of, on our part Thou art glorified !

But far be from us the delusion of supposing, that whilst we are suffering reproach for the name of Christ, we are the more at liberty to indulge in wilful sin ; that we may make up as it were unto ourselves, for what we lose in the esteem of men, by indulging our evil propensities, in murder or robbery, in hatred or dishonesty, in wronging or intermeddling with one another ! Far be from us that blind conceit, which would ascribe to our Christian profession, such scorn, or hurt, or loss, as is in truth the consequence of practices like these ! No, it must be "as a Christian," it must be for being Christians, for doing good, for believing truth, not for doing evil, not for believing a lie, it must be thus that we suffer, if we would "not be ashamed," if we would "glorify God on this behalf."

Instead of so presuming on having taken the part of God, instead of presuming on any immunity in sin, by reason of our professing to be servants of Christ, let us remember, that now "judgment must begin at the house of God ;" let us remember, that we who name the name of Christ, have the most to answer for, and are the most bounden to depart from iniquity. How hard then is it even for the righteous to be saved ! How hardly shall they that have the riches of God's grace, give a sufficient account of their many talents ; and make good their entrance into the kingdom of heaven ! What then "shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ?" "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?"

Lord, let us be on thy side, not only in professing thy religion, but also in doing thy will ! Lord, whilst we are suffering according to the will of God, let us also persevere in well doing ! Lord, when we have done all, let us commit our souls unto our heavenly Father, in full assurance of hope, that He will, as He has promised, count us righteous for thy sake !

Exhortations to the old and to the young.

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God || which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being * lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

|| Or, as much as in you is.

* Or, overruling.

§ 663. *Of resisting the devil.*

The elders whom St. Peter here exhorts were the presiding ministers in the several churches; selected probably from those who were oldest in the faith, those who had for the longest time been experienced in the grace of God. St. Peter speaks of himself as a fellow elder, that he may the better introduce his exhortation but adds that he was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." May his authority, and his example, give weight to these his words in the estimation of all ministers for ever! May they be moved like him to feed the flock of God, not by desire of worldly gain but by the love which they bear to Christ, not doing the work as a task but as a pleasure, not exercising their rule as if they loved dominion, but turning it to account as examples to the flock. And when the Shepherd of the shepherds shall appear, may they who have preached salvation to others, not fall short of it themselves, but "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away!"

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." The precepts of the Gospel give usually a twofold security for peace. The elder must rule meekly. The younger must meekly submit. If but one party obey their rule, both derive advantage. How much more when both parties are obedient! Let us then each in our several stations choose subjection in preference to command. Let us think rather of what we owe to those above us, than of what is due to us from those below us. Let us have humility for the clothing of all other graces. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, in the hope that He will then most largely give us grace when we are most abundantly humble, trusting that He will exalt us in his good time, and casting all our care on Him, because He careth for us.

We have before been told, to "be sober and watch unto prayer," because "the end of all things is at hand." Ch. 4. 7. The Bridegroom will soon be here to take us in with Him to his wedding. But further, we have a spiritual enemy, ever seeking to devour us, with all the eagerness of a lion looking for his prey. It is some comfort to think that this also is no "strange trial," but an affliction to which every one of us must needs be subject, during our sojourn upon earth. To be "stedfast in the faith," is a sure means of successfully resisting. Let us then meet our enemy with this conviction in our hearts, and with this prayer on our lips, that God, to whom we owe every good gift, and who has invited us by Jesus Christ to partake of his eternal glory, will after we have suffered awhile, make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us. Lord, however sure our great enemy may feel of succeeding against our souls, do Thou frustrate all his wiles! Lord, however glorious be our victory over Satan, to Thee be all the glory, all the praise!

St. Peter mentions that he sent this Epistle by Silvanus, whom he knew to be a very faithful brother to those whom he addressed. For he would teach us to take all means in our power, to recommend our testimony and exhortations to one another. He testified that the Gospel, in which they then were believers, is "the true grace of God." For he would have all men know that whatever may have been their faith before, whatever their notions of God, there is no real God except the God of the Scriptures, no saving faith except faith in Christ. He sends them the salutations of the church at Rome, and of St. Mark; he bids them "greet one another with a kiss of charity;" and for his own greeting, he prays for peace to be with all that are in Christ Jesus. For he thus shews us, how above all things he desired that we should love each other, and have peace with God. "Amen." So be it, heavenly Father, let us have peace with Thee, through Christ. "Amen." Let us have love one for another, even as Thou hast love for us!

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER, 1. 1—9.

God's good gift, and our manifold duties.

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us || to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption

that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. *

|| Or, by.

..

§ 664. *The experiment of practising the Gospel.*

St. Peter would have grace and peace multiplied unto us, "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace," is the counsel of Eliphaz, in the book of Job. 22. 21. But alas in how many instances has the mere knowledge of the Gospel been abused to the gendering of strife! How oftentimes through the folly and perversity of man, have been fulfilled the prophetic words of Christ, "I came not to send peace, but a sword!" Matt. 10. 34. And yet He has given us, He is always giving us, if we would but receive his gifts, not only knowledge, but "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." And this He does, "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." For to know Christ, and Him crucified, is to know that we have a Saviour, to know that for his sake our sins are forgiven, to know that we have a way made for us to be holy, to know that we may be, if we will, happy henceforth for ever. And the having these "exceeding great and precious promises," leads us on to be "partakers of the divine nature," and to escape "the corruption that is in the world through lust." For who can know that heaven is within his reach, and not desire to obtain it? Who can believe that it is promised to himself, and not endeavour to become meet to partake of it? Who would any longer be the slave of his own passions, if he could feel assured that he might really have the mastery? Who would follow the devices of his own corrupt nature, if he had no doubt that he might be made partaker of a nature that is divine?

Now the way thereto is this, that we be not content with assenting to the truth of these gracious tidings, to the certainty of these precious promises, but that we give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, being stedfast in doing that which we believe to be our duty; and to our virtue knowledge, being desirous to know more that we may also do more. To these let us add temperance, or the due restraint of our own appetites; and patience, or the due submission to what is put upon us by others; and godliness, the disposition to serve God in every thing; and brotherly kindness, towards all mankind; and charity, which is to love man out of our love for God. For these are things not only needful in themselves, but largely helpful towards a full knowledge of the Lord. "For if these things be in you and abound," if you grow in these graces, if you are fruitful in these good works, they cause you to be also fruitful in heavenly wisdom, they help you to make progress in the understanding of the Gospel. Whereas if you are lacking these things you are blind, you cannot see beyond the world of sense, you cannot remember what you have once learnt of truth, or what once you have experienced of God's forgiveness.

So applicable is this in religion which has been found to hold good in all other matters that experiment or trial is the safest road to sure knowledge. He that would have a right judgment in things spiritual must live a spiritual life. He that would learn of the doctrine whether it be of God, must do God's will. See John 7. 17. He that would know Jesus Christ and Him crucified, must act according to such knowledge as he has already, must strive, according to his present light, to glorify his Saviour. Where then is the disputer of this world? Put him to this test. Bid him give all diligence to believe and to obey. Let him try what it is to be holy, and he will need no reasoning to convince him that it is the way to be happy. Let him taste, and see, let him touch and handle, the joy that comes of devotion and of love; and he will find that the Lord is gracious, he will own that God's word is truth.

Lord help us both to "see afar off," and to experience the things which are nigh to every one of us; both to have faith in the world which is invisible, and also to exercise, in this world, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity!

St. Peter puts his readers in remembrance.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as ¹ our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised

fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not || in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

¹ John 21. 18.*

|| Or, at any time.

§ 665. *The evidence of testimony and of prophecy.*

The apostle would not be negligent to put his readers in remembrance of their high calling, and of their manifold duties, though he supposed them to know these things already. So unwelcome are they to our corrupted minds! So apt are we to forget that there is an entrance ministered to us, a way opened for us, to reach unto heaven, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord; a path, in which if we walk according to God's directions, we need "never fall." To day we feel convinced. To morrow we act as if we believed never a word of all that God has told us. This hour we tremble with fear, or we rejoice in the hope of eternity. The next hour, the next moment, we grovel in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world. Oh that we may be continually reminded by the succession of Christian ordinances, and by the faithful admonition of Christian friends, continually stirred up to give all diligence, to make our "calling and election sure!"

This brotherly admonition St. Peter thought an employment most suitable to the last portion of his life, when he knew that he must shortly put off the tabernacle of the flesh, even as Christ had shewed him. Let us think of this when our own death appears to be approaching. Let us at such a season use double diligence to put our friends in remembrance of life eternal. And let us do all we can whilst yet we live, to raise in all who live around us a concern for their souls, and a desire to glorify their Saviour, so deep and lively and strong, as that it shall abide when we shall have departed. And when we consider that we are dying all our life long, let us never think ourselves too young, too healthful, or too strong, to begin to bear our testimony to the truth, to begin to put our brethren in remembrance of the Gospel.

What a convincing testimony is this of the apostle, that he had been an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ! He was one of those who beheld when our Lord was transfigured. He saw the exceeding great glory which shone round about Jesus in the mount. He heard the voice which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In this he could not be deceived. By this he was made fully certain of there being nigh unto us, around us, and about us, a world of glory, a God of might, majesty, and dominion; of whom Christ Jesus is the beloved Son. Let us think often of the precious testimony of the apostle, now that he speaks no longer. We live after his decease. Let us have always in remembrance the things of which he told us. He is where that brightness never ceases, that holy company never vanishes away. Do we feel that it would be good for us to be where he is? Let us be mindful to do what he has told us.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy;" more sure in this sense that it is more lasting. Testimony may in some respects seem enfeebled by the lapse of time. The evidence of the prophecies grows stronger, as revolving years bring them more and more unto fulfilment. At first, though the light shine, the place is dark. This day star, though it be glowing in the heavens, is not seen by us till it arise in our hearts. The prophetic truth is always clear and sure in itself, since it neither comes of man's will, nor depends on man's will for its completion. It is written under the controul of the Holy Spirit of God. And under God's overruling providence it is fulfilled. Our part is to see, in its fulfilment, a proof daily more and more convincing, that the Scriptures are God's word, and that therefore Jesus Christ is our Saviour and our Lord.

False teachers ; their character and end.

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their || pernicious ways ; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you : whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment ;

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly ;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha

into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly ;

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked :

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds ;)

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished :

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise *government. ¹ Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation † against them before the Lord.

• || Or, *lascivious ways*, as some copies read.

* Or, *dominion*.

¹ Jude 8.

† Some read, *against themselves*.

§ 666. *The wicked punished. The godly delivered.*

Well may all who profess to teach the Gospel tremble, when they read this terrible account of “false teachers,” of the evil which *such* do, and of the end which awaits them. Well may they, and all, examine diligently and honestly, by the help of such signs as are here given, whether what they teach, or learn, be according to the truth, or be no more than “feigned words.” One sign of false teachers is that they privily “bring in damnable heresies.” Under colour of preaching the Gospel of God, they introduce the inventions of men, and doctrines of devils, to the perdition of their followers and of themselves ; “even denying the Lord that bought them,” in some instances going so far from the truth, as to deny that He is their Redeemer. Another sign is that “many shall follow their pernicious ways,” so that the numbers and increase of any sect are far from proving that it is the true church. “By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of,” so that the praise of man is not likely to be found on the same side with the truth of God. “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” Here is another sign of “false teachers,” the “love of money.” Another is mentioned afterwards, that they “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.” For what short of true doctrine, right faith, and real grace, can enable them to mortify the flesh, any more than to renounce the world ? Another sign is that they “despise governments,” set at nought all lawful authority ; nay, are so “presumptuous” and “self-willed” that they are “not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” They dare, what angels dare not, to bring a railing accusation against such as are in place of rule. Now if it be by these signs that we may know false teachers, what sect, nay what church, has been without them ?

Far be it then from us to interpret passages such as this only as against those who differ from ourselves ! Rather let us see what warning we may hence derive for our own correction and amendment. The swiftness of the destruction which they bring upon themselves, that their “judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not,” these are words which ought to awaken in every hearer a lively anxiety for his brethren, a most earnest concern for himself. God, we are reminded, “spared not the angels that sinned.” He “spared not the old world,” the world before the flood. He turned “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes,” “making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.” Shall not these things alarm the disobedient, awaken the slothful, and stir up to double diligence the zealous and devout ? Shall not these things satisfy us that God is able, and also fully purposed, to overtake the wicked in their wickedness, and to consume them with the breath of his displeasure ?

And yet God has no pleasure in the death of them that die. When He brought in the flood, He saved Noah and his family. When He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha, He “delivered just Lot.” And whilst He reserves “the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished,” He knows “how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” Praised be his name, for the grace of godliness ! Praised be his name for deliverance from sin ! Praised be his name for the many true prophets, and true teachers, who in the midst of surrounding error, proclaim aloud the glad tidings of pardon for sins past, and grace to sin no more, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

The false teachers further described.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.

13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

|| Gr. an adulteress.

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were † clean escaped from them who live in error.

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

† Or, for a little, or, a while, as some read.

§ 667. *That these warnings are for our profit*

With what earnestness does the apostle strive to put us on our guard against the false teachers here described! With what force of language, and in what colours of hateful deformity, does he describe them! And such as these had crept into the ministerial office, even within so short a time as the life of one man, since the death of Christ! Mysterious forbearance of the most just God, that He should allow them to exist, nay and also to bear rule in his church! Marvellous consequence of his overruling power, that out of their very wickedness, so early manifested, He should form these profitable warnings for his church for ever!

From the beginning, all Christians have been thus put upon their guard, against such as "speak evil of the things they understand not," against such as indulge in excess of pleasure, so as even to be guilty of intemperance in the daytime, against such as make light of their own barefaced hypocrisy, in the midst of their continual festivities. From the beginning we have all been put upon our guard against teachers addicted to adultery, who beguile unstable souls, whose heart is "exercised with covetous practices," and who are themselves children of perdition. Like Balaam, they are greedy of the rewards of divination, instead of diligent to fulfil the counsel of the Lord. They are as wells where the thirsty look for water and find none, as clouds whence we hope for rain, but to no purpose. By their high professions, they prevail with many, allowing them in their lusts, and thus confirming them anew in the error of their ways; promising liberty, when they mean no more than licence to sin, the most hateful service, the most slavish bondage. And then what a fall is this; what a defeat, what a captivity! To have been once made free, and again enslaved; once made more than conquerors, and again overcome; once enabled to stand upright, and again laid low! To have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to be again entangled therein! Oh how much worse is this latter end than the beginning! How much better had it been for these never to have known at all "the way of righteousness," than to have known it only to fall away from it! How justly may we apply to them those reproachful proverbs, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire!"

Thus we are put upon our guard. Thus if any such abominations must needs happen in the community of believers, it was meet that they should happen early, whilst yet there was an apostle living, to denounce them in words guided by inspiration of God. But with all this warning, how often have these offences been repeated! How many instances of this corrupt teaching, and of these gross practices, are still to be met with amongst professors of the Gospel! God defend us from such abuse of his goodness! God save us from such perversion of his truth! God grant that having once escaped, through Christ, out of the bondage of iniquity, we may be no more taken captive therein for ever!

The scoffer confuted.

1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as

they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth *standing out of the water and in the water*:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished;

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

|| Gr. *consisting*.

§ 668. *The world devoted to destruction.*

Even the pure minds of those whose intentions are sincere, and whose hearts are right with God, need to be often stirred up "by way of remembrance." And this was the object of St. Peter in both of his Epistles. And this is one chief use which we ought to make of all parts of Scripture, to refresh, by frequent reading of them, the impression which they made on us at the first; to stamp upon our souls by the oft repeated impulses of these weighty words, an enduring image of our Lord; and so to occupy the time of our sojourn upon earth with the study of things heavenly, that it shall be impossible for us ever to forget what we have once known, and believed, and hoped, and loved. God grant that we may be ever thus mindful, both of the words which were spoken aforetime by the prophets of the Old Testament, and of the commandments which have been delivered to us by the apostles of our Saviour Christ!

We are here warned that in the last days there shall come scoffers. And this makes it doubly necessary for us to be familiar with the truth, never to lose sight of it, never to let it slip out of our remembrance. For if we may judge by the coming of such scoffers, the last days have now arrived, we are now exposed to the very danger, against which the apostle would provide us with protection. For too true it is of the times in which we live that in all ranks of life such scoffers may be met with; men who walk after their own lusts, doing that which is right in their own eyes, as if there were no God who had revealed his will, and who will call them to account for setting it at naught. What, say they, shall we deny ourselves in any thing we have a mind to, out of compliance with the prejudices of the unenlightened? Has the God of whom they tell us kept his promise? Does He, as they pretend, care for what we are employed about? Does He interfere, as they imagine, in what happens upon earth? Have not all things continued in their customary state as long as we can remember, as far back as we can learn with any certainty? And may we not hence conclude that they will continue still? May we not safely live as if there never had been, no where is, nor ever will be, any other power than that which now is manifest, any other course than what now we call the course of nature, any other life than this which now is ours, and which therefore, whilst we have it, we will enjoy to the uttermost?

But against this scoffing the apostle points to one proof, of universal interest, the flood which happened in the days of Noah. Of this all men that ever since have lived must needs hear some tidings, or might do, if they would. For which of all Noah's children, or of his children's children, could fail to speak of it to their children after them? And what nation can now be found, that has any history at all, which has not preserved in its history some knowledge of the flood? And how can they who have sufficient ingenuity, to frame these scoffing questions, help knowing, both from history, and from traces now remaining on the surface of the earth, that this globe which we inhabit has been once overflowed with water, that it once perished by the word and power of the same God, who at the first made it and has since preserved it? Yes, the fountains of the great deep were broken up by his hand, and the windows of heaven were opened; the waters of the deluge were let loose at his command, to swallow up the whole generation of the wicked. And though He restored the wondrous balance, though He again pent in the sea into its place, saying, hitherto shalt thou go and no further, though He established "the heavens and the earth, which are now;" yet it is but for a short time, it is but for another, and more fearful, and more utter destruction; they are but "kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Oh let not us then willingly be ignorant either of God's past judgments or of his approaching visitation! Oh let not us so live as to regard that day with terror, but rather so as to dwell with hope and joy on "the promise of his coming!"

The day of the Lord will come.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and *||* hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look

for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

|| Or, hastening the coming.

§ 669. *How we ought to look for Christ's coming.*

The flood which God brought in "upon the world of the ungodly," ch. 2. 5, is one chief argument wherewith to confute the scuffer, who thinks that all things go on, and have gone on,* and will go on for ever, just as they are now. Another weighty consideration is this, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." God dwells not in time, but in eternity. With Him there is neither before, nor after; but all things are always present. And the few thousand years during which He suffers iniquity to abound, however long they seem to us who measure length by sense, are not one moment unto Him who is infinite, eternal, the Creator of both space and time. Thus "the Lord *is* not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." It is not for lack of purpose, or strength, or speed, that He waits ere He comes to judge mankind. No, it is out of his gracious forbearance. He "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Oh precious interval,* oh inestimable opportunity, oh time never to be recalled; during which we might escape the wrath to come! Most merciful, most patient, most holy, God, oh grant that we may not neglect so great salvation!

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night;" as suddenly, as unexpectedly, as much to the surprise, confusion, and dismay, of those who ~~keep~~ no watch. And in that day "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." All these things, which from the beginning of the creation seem to abide, except at the flood, in so uniform a course, shall suddenly cease to be, shall perish with great noise and with great heat; the very earth itself, as well as all that man has wrought on it, yea all that God has so wonderfully framed, perishing by fire. What a day of terror will that be unto the wicked! What a day of glory to the righteous! What a manifestation of the presence, power, justice, and goodness of God, will then be forced on every soul of man! And that day may come tomorrow. It may come today. Each day of our lives we ought to be "looking for" it. Each day of our lives we ought to be "hastening unto" it; nay and also hastening it on, by our prayers that Christ's kingdom come, by our zeal and diligence, and labour of love, in preparing the way for Christ's coming. Let us therefore both pray and watch. Let us live in "all holy conversation and godliness," as if we were really looking daily for Christ to come.

Because all are sentenced to death we are too apt to look for death as the sure end of life. We ought to remember how probable it is, that ere we die, whilst now we are in full enjoyment of health and strength, whilst the world and all its works are in their accustomed course, the spark will be kindled, the smothered flames will burst forth all at once, the heavens will be on fire, the earth melt, the Judge appear, the wicked be turned into hell, the saints rejoice in glory. This is God's promise. And according to this promise, we "look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." We are sure that God's word will come to pass. There will be another world. There is another world. Only now it is hidden from our eyes. Then it will be present to our sense. Do we see it now by faith? Do we behold that which is invisible? Are we fully assured of that for which we hope? Let us then "be diligent," let us watch carefully, and work stedfastly, that we may be found of our Lord "in peace, without spot, and blameless." Let us "account that

the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." Let us consider that it is for us sinners, that we may be saved from perishing everlastingly, it is for this He waits, it is for this He puts up with the perversity of many, it is in order that He may save some. That this is God's purpose in his forbearance towards man had been already signified, as St. Peter here observes, by St. Paul; not only in what he had written to the same persons, meaning probably his Epistle to the Hebrews, see Heb. 2. 3, but "also in all his epistles." In these there "are some things hard to be understood;" the Holy Spirit of God having condescended to make use of our inadequate language, as well as of our imperfect services, in the revelation and ministry of the truth. But far be it from us to wrest these difficulties to our own destruction. Far be it from us not to study these Epistles at all, because there are in them some things difficult! Let us so much the more diligently read and mark them. Let us so much the more firmly cleave to what we know, so much the more stedfastly persist in truth against all the allurements of error. Let us so much the more take pains that we may grow at once in grace and in knowledge, in acquaintance with the deep things of God, and in depth, and warmth, and strength, of devotion, and thankfulness, and love.

"To him be glory both now and for ever." To God all wise, all just, all good, who out of regard to the precious blood of his dear Son, forgives our iniquities, and saves our souls, to Him be ascribed all the praise, unto all eternity. "Amen."

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN. 1. 1—10.

St. John testifies of his own experience.

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard

of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

§ 670. *Sin forgiven, holiness enjoined.*

The disciple "whom Jesus loved," John 13. 23, writes chiefly concerning love, tells us how God has loved us, and describes to us in the language of affection the blessedness of loving Him. Oh that we may learn from his Epistles to walk in love! Oh that we may be helped, by his stirring words, to cast away the spirit of bondage, and to serve God with all the ardour of our hearts! He testifies to us "that which was from the beginning," for it was always thus with God, He has always loved us, and from the beginning He gave his Son for our salvation. And further, St. John testifies that of which he had been an eyewitness, in regard to the Word of life, which also "was from the beginning," and which "Word was God." John 1. 1. He had seen with his own eyes the manifestation of divine life in the person of Jesus Christ, and he delighted to tell of it with his lips. He rejoiced to write it with a pen in a book for ever, that he might by this means shew unto us "that eternal life, which was with the Father," and which had been manifested to himself. He would not, he could not, keep his knowledge, his experience, and his joy, locked up in his own breast. He must needs have us partakers of it. He had attained unto fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and he would have us partake of the same fellowship. He writes on purpose that our joy may be full.

Now let us compare with these feelings, and with this example of St. John, our own practice in the selfsame matter. First, have we any of this joy in believing? Next, are we taking pains to communicate it to our brethren? We might have it, though we are not eyewitnesses. We might have this joy to fulness, though we have not seen with our eyes, nor handled with our hands, "of the Word of life." We might have it;

for St. John wrote on purpose that we might, on purpose that our joy might be full. And St. John wrote not in vain. There are some that have this fulness of joy. There are some who rejoice in leading others to rejoice in the Lord. We can hardly feel these things deeply as we ought to do, without studying to make them to be felt. We may suppose it is our diffidence, we may say it is our apprehension lest we should disgrace our profession; we may deceive ourselves with these specious reasons for our silence. But the truth is, we have not the fulness of joy. If we had, we could not conceal it. We could not help its overflowing. We could not help manifesting in our very looks, as well as in our words, that our hearts are filled with the sense of all God's goodness in our redemption through Christ Jesus.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." We thought perhaps in our evil hearts, that St. John was going to tell us of God's goodness, in such sort as to allow us in our sins. We were ready to say, if the tidings are so joyful, we may take our fill of present pleasure. But hold, mistaken sinner, "God is light;" and this is that which is to fill you full of joy. He sees every movement of your affections. He is privy not only to what you do in the dark, but to what you think and feel in silence, without doing at all. And our joy is to come of our having fellowship with Him. This then we cannot have if we walk in darkness. And if we were to do so and to say we have this joy, "we lie and do not the truth." We must "walk in the light, as he is in the light." We must do, and feel, what is fit for God to witness; and then we shall have fellowship with them that have fellowship with Him; then "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

For though it is the most gross misapprehension of the gospel tidings to suppose that they may serve for our security in sinning; yet on the other hand they do contain free pardon for sinners, and they require us both to feel and own that we are sinners, in order for our sins to be forgiven. To "say that we have no sin," would be as far from the truth, as to say that we have fellowship with God, whilst we sin wilfully. To "say that we have not sinned," is to give the lie to what God hath said, in speaking to us all as sinners. But "if we confess our sins," if instead of loving them, and hiding them, we at once acknowledge them and loathe them, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," to blot out all our past iniquity, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," to make us pure and holy unto Himself. "Faithful;" for He has said it, and He will do it. "Just," for Christ died to make atonement for our sins. This is to walk in light, when we see how hateful sin is, when it becomes hateful to us as unto God. This is to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, when we consent unto God's word that it is true, alike in the exposing of our sinfulness, and in the setting forth of his love, alike in condemning us for our transgressions, and in proclaiming our pardon and our peace through Christ.

The old and the new commandment.

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

|| Gr. scandal.

§ 671. *That love comes of the true light now shining.*

Within the compass of a few words the apostle charges us not to sin, and also tells us that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This is what the natural man cannot understand, cannot see to be consistent, any more than what had just before been stated, that we must never deny that we are sinners, and yet must by no means continue in our sins. For by nature we are persuaded that sin is so much gain, that it is desirable to sin if we safely might. Whereas the truth is that sin is the worst of evil in itself; a thing to be hated though no harm should come of it, to be abhorred because God abhors it. And therefore the more we see of it in ourselves, we confess to it the more sorrowfully; we flee from it the more eagerly. And in like manner we are only so much the more encouraged to renounce it, by the assurance that Christ died to save us from it, and that He pleads with God that we may be forgiven it. "He is the propitiation for our sins." Therefore henceforth we sin not. "And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Therefore let the whole world repent and amend. Thus different is right reason, from the reasoning of the world. Thus wide apart is the wisdom of God, from the wisdom of man. And thus only by keeping the commandments of the Lord can we know that we know Him aright. All other views of Christ are wrong. All other notions of the Gospel are false. All other pretences to experience in the grace of Christ are lies. Only they who keep his word, only they who do his will, only they who so walk, "even as he walked," these and these alone can know that they know Christ; these and these alone can be assured, without risk of self deceit, that they are in Him, and that the truth is in them. As long therefore as we would fain sin if we might, and especially if we think we may sin more safely because of the atonement made for us by Christ, so long we are in ignorance, so long we know Him not; and so long, if we say we know Him, we are liars.

And this is "no new commandment." It is the word which Christ's disciples have heard from the beginning. It is "that which was from the beginning," ch. 1. 1, even as early, as that God loved us, for so early, from the very first, did He forbid us to transgress. This was the first commandment given to Adam in the garden of Eden. This is that which forms the tenour of the whole Law revealed by Moses, Thou shalt not sin. In this therefore the Gospel and the Law are one. In protesting against sin the apostle writes no new commandment. And yet he had a new commandment to enforce; the commandment of love. He desired to impress upon us, what the Law had not fully revealed, the love of God, and what the Law had not effectually compassed, that we should love God, and one another. This thing is true, both in respect of God, and in respect of man, that to love is to keep God's word. In this there had before been darkness. But "the true light now shineth," and that light is the light of love.

How grievously then are we mistaken, if we say that we are in the light, and yet hate our brethren! How little do we know whither we are going, if we are still capable of being unkind unto each other, if we are not willing to bear with that perversity of temper in each other, which God so patiently puts up with in ourselves! How great will be our fall, when least we look for it, if we go on in this gross darkness, and take it for the light! "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light;" this is the true light. This is the light which shines forth from God in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. See how Jesus loved us, and gave Himself for us! See how He wept for our sufferings! see how He died for our sins!

Lord teach us to love, as Thou hast loved us! Lord teach us to love Thee, and to love our brethren!

St. John writes to all, that they love not the world.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong,

and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

§ 672. *To love God is the way not to love the world.*

See how earnestly men of all ages, yea and children also, are here addressed, by how many motives they are urged, over and over again, to receive the word of exhortation, the Gospel of Christ. "Little children," observe this, "your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake." Never forget this. Know this, know the Son, and you know the Father. Consider yourselves to be pardoned, redeemed, saved, for the Son's sake. Grow up in love and holiness accordingly. "Fathers," lay you to heart this twice repeated admonition, "Ye have known him that is from the beginning." Oh think how much you have to answer for, in having knowledge! Oh think how precious is the privilege of knowing, when it is accompanied by doing! "Young men," you also are written to, you also are admonished, "because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Yes, you are admonished twice over, as having "overcome the wicked one." For if you have once prevailed, this leaves you inexcusable if you thereafter fall away. And therefore St. John so much the more earnestly exhorts you, the more you know, the more you are able to prevail. Oh that young men, and all men, would well consider this, that the best use we can make of strength is to use it in God's service; that the more we have of it, we ought the more thankfully to use it in glorifying our God and Saviour.

This then is the best of seasons for renouncing the world, even this, when we have health and strength to enjoy it. For this is the season in which we can do God most service, and best prove that we really serve Him from the heart. Does it seem too great a sacrifice? Do we imagine that we shall be doing some great thing for God? Behold, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. Behold, when we have given up all, it is altogether next to nothing; so soon does the world pass away, and the lusts thereof. We cling to it indeed fondly, and count it for great treasure. We plead earnestly to be allowed to keep at least some one worldly pleasure, some one sensual delight. But in proportion as we thus plead, thus cling, we are really loving the whole world in our hearts, and the love of the Father is not in us. For all these things, without exception, are of one character, come of one service; and that is not of the Father, but of the world. Let us therefore both freely give up all, and also be aware that all is but as a trifle. It is as the toy which a kind parent is withholding from his children for their good, and which none but children reckon worth having. Let us both count the cost, and know that it is small; yea let us pay it cheerfully, with ease. It is not worthy for one moment to be compared with what we gain by doing the will of God, even to abide for ever.

And yet how many of those who pass for faithful Christians find it hard not to love the world! How closely do its pleasures, its business, its riches, its honours, its friendship, and its praise, entwine themselves in the affections of the heart! We agree that it must pass away. But how we hope, that it will abide a little longer! We deny not that it is vanity. And yet how we suffer it to engage our interest, and to vex our spirit! This is because the love of the Father is not in us. There is not room for both in the same heart. God, if He have any, must have all. How can any one of all the things that He has made, stand one moment in competition with Himself, in the soul which has once the faith to see Him as He is? Oh that our Lord and Saviour may shew unto us the Father! Oh that we may see the Father by seeing Christ! Oh that we may see Him as He is, "full of grace and truth," John 1. 14, and so love Him, and so through Him love God, that we may have no heart left to love the pomps and vanities of the world!

Of many antichrists, and of the unction of the Holy One.

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

|| Or, *it.*

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

26 These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in ||him.

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, †ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

† Or, *know ye.*

§ 673. *How we must avoid an antichristian spirit.*

To teach the ignorant is one great use of Christian exhortation, whether it be by speaking or by writing. But we see here that there is another use, of which we are not so apt to think, and this is, to encourage and to confirm those who already know. St. John writes to those of whom he trusted that they had "an unction from the Holy One," the anointing of the Holy Ghost, whereby they might "know all things," all that were needful for salvation. And yet he writes; nay, and he tells them that he writes not because they know not the truth, but because they know it, and because "no lie is of the truth." For this made it the more profitable for him to write to them; for this made them the less likely to wrest his writings to their own destruction. And let us remember that this is the case with holy Scripture in general. It is addressed to those who in some sort know the truth already. Ere we come to God we must believe that He is. See Heb. 11. 6. Ere we can read his word with profit, we must be persuaded that it is his word, and that it is written for our eternal good. With hearts touched by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, we shall then read with most profit, and most pleasure also, when we least seem to need instruction. When we know most, the word of God will best help us to know more; according as it is elsewhere written, "unto every one that hath shall be given." Matt. 25. 29.

And here accordingly God's children are instructed that they are now in the last time, in that period of the world when antichrist should come, and when there were already many antichrists. If so few of Christians are agreed as to what is meant by antichrist, is not this because they have not been taught by the anointing of the Spirit? Else instead of trying to fix the hateful name on those who happen to be most opposed to us, we should rather watch that there be no antichristian spirit amongst ourselves, and beware lest those who are of our own company contrive to seduce us. For these are they who are antichrists, such as go out from communion with true Christians and separate themselves, such as deny "that Jesus is the Christ," such as deny the Father and the Son, deny their real relation to each other, deny their power by disobeying their commandments, deny their goodness by counting their commandments grievous.

Would we then be safe from the name and sin of antichrist? Let us take care, that we have that abide in us, which we have heard from the beginning. Let us "continue in the Son and in the Father." Let us acknowledge the Son, and we shall have the Father also. Let us abide in Christ; not setting up as in his place any merit of our own, or any efficacy in the ministrations of one another; but resting our whole hope and trust in Him as our only Prophet, Priest, and King; believing what He has told us, doing what He has commanded us. And thus, when He shall appear, we shall have confidence, we shall "not be ashamed before him at his coming." For whilst we hold that He is Himself our righteousness, and therefore all holy, all just, all good, we shall derive assurance from such works as through his grace we do, that we are really "born of him."

Lord give us this proof that we have been begotten anew, the leading a new life of righteousness! Lord fulfil in us this promise that God has promised us, "even eternal life!"

God's love manifest in his calling us his sons.

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that

doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

|| Or, *commandment*.

§ 674. *The children of God distinguished from those of the devil.*

Most glorious title this, to be given to the children of men, "the sons of God!" Most affecting thought this, to God's sons, that the world, the bulk of mankind, knows them not, because it has not known their Lord! That it mistakes their character, misconstrues their motives, because it is yet a stranger to the love of Christ! But whatever the world may think, they are the sons of God notwithstanding. And though what they shall be is not yet manifest, they know thus much of their crown of glory, that it will impart to them a resemblance unto their Saviour. For hereafter they will "see him as he is." And if even faith in his perfections can already change us to the likeness of Himself, see 2 Cor. 3. 18, how much more shall sight when we see Him face to face? And might not this very thought now help us to be changed? Might not the hope that we shall hereafter be like God, make us strive to be like Him now? It might, it must, it does. It does with those who really have this hope. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he," even as God, "is pure."

As is the Father, so must be the sons. The Father's love which He has bestowed upon us exempts us not from the duty of obeying Him, nay rather it binds us the more closely to obey. Sin is still the "transgression of the law," and that of a better law, the Gospel. And God has now been manifest in the flesh, on purpose "to take away our sins." So that for us to sin is to oppose Him in this his work of love. And besides "in him is no sin." So that, "whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," being one with Him in whom he abideth. Whereas, "whosoever sinneth," that is to say, wilfully, is so far from habitually abiding in Him, that he "hath not seen him, neither known him." Let us then take warning, and suffer no man to deceive us in this weighty matter. He, let us remember, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous," even as God is righteous. The righteousness of God is not in word but in deed. Such must be also man's obedience, or it is none at all.

And again, let it be here observed, that this is the very thing which shews the difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. "For the devil sinneth from the beginning." And it was to destroy the works of the devil that the Son of God was manifested, when He was manifested "to take away our sins." If we do not righteousness, if we love not our brethren, much more if like Cain we hate our brother, and by hatred are guilty also of murder, see Matt. 5. 21, 22, in such a case we are of that wicked one, in such a case it is madness to presume to think that we are numbered with the children of God.

No, if we are born of God, we are become averse to sin. Whilst his seed is in us, and in proportion as it is in us we cannot sin, we cannot sin intentionally, we cannot sin without loathing of ourselves. And this is the message which we have heard from the beginning, "that we should love one another." So that if we are born of God we shall especially do his will in this respect, the love of our fellow creatures. We shall love them because God loves them. We shall love them even when they hate us, because God loved us, when we were at enmity with Him. And yet more we shall love them if their works are righteous, and if they love their brethren; for this will be a token to us that they love our Lord.

That we must love in deed and in truth.

* 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

† Gr. persuade.

§ 675. *The consciousness of abiding in God.*

The Christian, whilst his heart glows with affection towards all men, must be prepared to endure the hatred of the world, which is like Cain, who slew his brother, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Ver. 12. If the worldly were not to hate us, they would no longer be the worldly, for this is the way we know that we abide not in death, that we have passed from death unto life, "because we love the brethren." Whereas to hate is as the sin of murder. And neither they that murder, nor they that hate, have "eternal life abiding in them." At the time of St. John's writing, "the world" meant those who often persecuted Christians, being the whole number of the heathen. How painful it is to think, that with us "the world" must mean baptized Christians, professors of the Gospel; how painful to be aware that of such there are now many, who because their own deeds are evil, hate those whose deeds are righteous! "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" Acts 7. 60. Lord, forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts!

With words from which these are taken, our Lord prayed, whilst on the cross, for them that crucified Him. Whilst we learn his prayer, let us seek also to follow his example. He proved his love for us by laying down his life. Ought not we to have that affection for each other, which would make us count our lives not dear unto ourselves, if we could spend them for each other's good? Yet how many will not so much as spend their substance! How many will not give alms, except grudgingly and of necessity! How many see their brethren in need, not only without helping them, but also without feeling for them; nay, steeling their hearts purposely against the motions of pity, and yet professing all the while to love them! Far be from us such pretence of charity! Far be from us such words of hypocrisy! Let us prove our words by our deeds; by denying ourselves, that we may give to others.

Hereby we may "know that we are of the truth;" by what we give, by what we do, and by the affection with which we do it. Hereby we may confirm the hope in our own hearts. For we must know in our own hearts, whether we love in word only or in deed. If our love be only in word, our hearts are sure to condemn us; how much more God, who "knoweth all things!" But if it be in deed, they condemn us not. And "then have we confidence toward God." For then our actions, in which we cannot be mistaken, confirm the testimony of our feelings, in which else we might be easily deceived. We might help each other without loving. We might suppose we love, and say we love, without helping. But when we both find we help, and feel we love, then our hearts with good ground condemn us not, nay acquit us, nay approve us; nay, give us "confidence towards God," through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus "confidence toward God" is one precious fruit of our loving one another "in deed and in truth." Another is, that our prayers are heard and granted. For this is the way to receive what we ask, that we keep God's commandments, "and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." To believe and to love, these are his commandments. That we dwell in Him, and He in us, this is yet one more fruit of our keeping them. And the sign by which we are assured of this indwelling is this, "the Spirit which he hath given us." The gracious dispositions of which the converted heart is conscious in itself, the holy life which only by God's Spirit helping us we can possibly live, these make us to know that God is in us of a truth. God abides in man! Oh love past man's comprehension! O Thou, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, what are we, that Thou shouldest dwell in us? Make us, we pray Thee, more conscious of thy presence! Make us, we most earnestly beseech Thee, more meet to dwell with Thee for ever!

Warning against false prophets. That God is love.

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, wherof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

§ 676. *As God hath loved us so ought we to love one another.*

St. John shews the same anxiety which we have seen manifested in the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul, to warn us against the delusions of false teachers. And in his warning he refers to the gifts of the Spirit, with which teachers were then usually endowed, as well as to the influence of evil spirits, which was then sometimes sensibly displayed. Those who were liable to be imposed upon by the difference between the two, were bound to examine, and try which was which. And they might know the spirits that were of God, the teachers whose words and works were of the Holy Spirit, they might know them by this, that they taught Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, "come in the flesh," to die for our sins. Whereas there were some in those days, who doubted whether Jesus were really man, as well as some who denied that He was really God. And these partook of that "spirit of antichrist," of which much is said in Scripture, and which even then already was in the world.

Thus it is a spirit not of God, it is an antichristian spirit, which now leads men to deny of Jesus Christ that He is "come in the flesh," come from where He was before, even with God the Father, come in the likeness of man, even of the seed of the woman. They who now thus teach are "of the world." No wonder that "the world heareth them." No wonder that false doctrine, as to Christ's coming in the flesh is acceptable to the worldly minded. The apostles were of God. What they taught was of God's teaching. And only those who are "of God," only those who are devoutly disposed, will gladly hear them. Happy are they, who are willing as little children to be taught by their heavenly Father! Happy are they who prevail against such as would delude them, not by trusting in their own strength, but by believing that greater is He that is in them, than he that is in the world! This is our best security against false doctrine, that through God's grace we love the truth. This is our only safeguard against false teachers, that we submit ourselves to be taught of God, and to be instructed by those whom God has sent.

But how often has zeal for truth of doctrine been disgraced by animosity, bitterness, and strife! How seasonably does St. John return from what he had to say of false prophets, to Christ's commands that "we should love one another!" Ch. 3. 23. How powerfully does he enforce this duty by telling us that "love is of God," and that only they that love know God, or are born of Him! And above all, how irresistibly does he move us to mutual affection, by revealing to us this truth unknown before, that "God is love!" Oh glorious discovery! Oh comfortable assurance! He who made us, He who proves us, He who will judge the world in righteousness, He "is love." He is Almighty, He is entirely wise, and just, and good; but also He is love. If there be one word which better than any other expresses his whole character, that word is love. If there be any feeling in our hearts which more than any other, serves by faint resemblance to shadow forth what God feels for us, love is that feeling. And in this has his love been manifested, in his sending "his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." This is love worthy of the name. This is love indeed. Compared with this, our love of Him is no love at all; compared with his sending his Son to make atonement for our sins. This is the love which we ought to imitate in our loving one another. Let us then love, because "God so loved us." Let us love, even as God loved and loves us, freely, largely, constantly.

God's love for us, and ours for Him.

* 12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is † our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

† Gr. love with us.

§ 677. *The perfecting of love.*

"Herein is love," we have before been assured, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us." Ver. 10. And "we love him," it is here further stated, "because he first loved us." His love is the only love worthy of the name; and ours, such as it is, follows afterwards, because of his. Let us not then imagine that we can love Him first. Let us not try to love Him first, by way of getting Him to love us afterwards. But let us first have a just view of his love for us, fixed firmly in our hearts by faith, as our best way, our only way to love Him. "God is love." This is what God is. And this we must first believe, ere we can love Him as we ought. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This is what God has done. And this also we must first believe, before we can approach to loving Him as He requires. Thus He loved us from the moment of our birth. Thus He loved us from the foundation of the world. And thus this his love for us is the ground on which alone we effectually love Him.

But how can we prove our love for Him? How can we have proof of it for our own satisfaction? May we not be easily deceived in our feelings towards One, whom no man at any time has seen? To prevent the risk of this self-deceit, the apostle points to the love of one another, as one way to have perfected in us the love of God. Let us love our brother whom we have seen. Let us have sensible proof of our loving him. Let us find our hands free to give to the relief of his necessities, our tongues slow to tell of his faults, and apt to speak his praise; let us feel our hearts incapable of hating him, our tears flowing for his afflictions, our joy kindling at his rejoicing. Let us thus love our brother. And we may be sure that we do love him in real earnest. Let us thus love our brother, for God's sake, because God has so commanded us; and we have then reason to think that we do indeed love God, we then may safely trust that "God dwelleth in us." "Hereby knew we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." For only by the influence of his Spirit in our hearts could we attain to thus loving one another, only by believing and confessing what St. John had seen and testified, that "Jesus is the Son of God," sent by the Father to be "the Saviour of the world." To know and believe this is to know and believe "the love that God hath to us." To know and believe that "God is love," and that his love was manifest in Christ dying for us, to dwell in love out of this our belief that God loves us, this is the way for us to dwell in God, and God in us.

And here let us note one other precious fruit of love, of that love which comes in us from our persuasion that God "first loved us;" "we may have boldness in the day of judgment." For though "God is love," yet there is a "day of judgment." Or rather, there must be one, because God is love, because He loves us too well to suffer sin to go unpunished. But in that day there are some who will have boldness. And these are they, who whilst here they live on earth are likened in point of love to God. "As he is, so are we in this world." This it is that gives us boldness. This is the perfecting of love, for it to be like God's. And the nearer our love is to perfect, we have the less of fear. Where fear is, there is pain. Where love is perfect, there is only joy. Those whom we love perfectly, we cannot fear at all. We could meet without alarm even the worst of men in situations the most perilous, if we could attain to loving them entirely for the sake of Christ. How much rather should we stand with unmingled joy before the presence of our gracious God, were we fully assured in our souls, that for Christ's sake He does entirely love us?

How many witnesses there are to the record God gave of his Son.

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, be-

cause the Spirit is truth.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

§ 678. *How sure we ought to feel of the truth as it is in Jesus.*

In the growth of the Christian character, each separate part gives and receives assistance by its connexion with the rest. We know that we love God by finding that we love the brethren. See ch. 4. 12, 20. And also "by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Now every believer in Christ Jesus is a child of God. And if we love the parent we must love the child. Do we then love this Parent? Do we keep his commandments? Do we keep them, and feel that they "are not grievous?" This is a new test or proof here suggested, and one of very great use for our information. If we obey God grudgingly and of necessity, if we serve in fear as unto a hard master, if we had rather disobey Him than obey; then his commandments are grievous unto us, then we do not love God. No, we must be assured that all which He commands, is commanded for our good. We must be persuaded of every word which He has spoken, whether it forbid us to enjoy, or require us to suffer, that it still comes of the same love with which He loved us, when He gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Then we shall delight to do all his pleasure. Then we shall love God. Then we shall know that we do really love God's children. Then we shall love them as our brethren, for we shall be his children ourselves. Yes, then we overcome the world, and keep God's commandments, when we are born of God. And it is our faith in Jesus that He is the Son of God, this it is that gives us the victory.

Now for the strengthening of our faith in Christ, let us consider that He was manifested "by water," at his baptism, and by "blood," at his death, to be the Son of God come in the flesh; not by his baptism only, but at a dearer rate, by his death, when both water and blood poured out from his side. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." Even as God is love, so also the Holy Ghost is truth. And this true witness testified, both in heaven and in earth. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." "And there are three that bear witness in earth;" the Holy Ghost by the written word, and the baptism and death of Christ by the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. And these three last agree in one testimony, as the three first actually "are one." How much greater then than any witness of man is this testimony of God; this witness, "which he hath testified of his Son," this record, "that God hath given to us eternal life," and that "this life is in his Son!" How much more sure may we become of this truth, than of any other, seeing that if we believe on the Son of God we have the witness in ourselves! We have it in the new life which now we lead by faith, whereby we overcome the world. We have it in the ability we now find within ourselves, to keep God's commandments, and to keep them gladly.

Here is another threefold testimony, the witness of God, the witness of man, the witness which we have within ourselves. God speaks from heaven, man repeats on earth, conscience assures us in our own hearts within. All things unite for the satisfaction of the believer; all things agree to help us in believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Dare we make God a liar? Or do we suppose that the apostles and disciples of our Lord united to devise a cunning fable? Or shall we doubt the change which we feel within ourselves? We cannot, we dare not; we would not if we durst. We thank God for the knowledge of our Saviour. We have joy and peace in believing. We are eager to bear testimony to the same truth ourselves.

Lord, make us faithful witnesses! Lord, prosper Thou our testimony! Lord help us to make it manifest by our words, and by our actions, by our behaviour to each other, and by our reverence for Thee, that Thou hast given us in thy Son eternal life!

That we know the truth.

* 12 He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin *which* is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto

death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. And we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

|| Or, concerning him.

§ 679. *Holy confidence.*

How ill does it become professors of the Gospel to be either confident in themselves, or distrustful of the testimony of God! How confidently does St. John here declare the full assurance of hope, which he felt in his own heart, and desired that we should feel in ours! Far be from us all mistrust of the truth! Far be from us all faintness of purpose in avowing it! Let it be heard in our conversation, let it be seen in our lives, that we have not so much as the shadow of a doubt, that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." For this is the apostle's object in writing to those who already believe in the name of the Son of God, that they may be confirmed in their faith and in their knowledge, that they may be quite sure that they have in Christ eternal life, that they may be quite confident in believing on his name.

Now this confidence is to be manifested in several important points, which are here distinctly set forth. First in respect of prayer, we must pray in faith, nothing doubting, if we ask according to God's will; nothing doubting, either that God hears us, or that He will for Christ's sake grant our petitions. Who could think, to hear our customary prayers, that we feel any such confidence at all? Who would suppose that we have but to kneel down, and to desire in our hearts, and to ask with our lips, as God would have us; and that thus we might be sure of getting pardon for sin, help to holiness, peace, joy, and eternal life; not only for ourselves, but also for our brethren? There are indeed some sinners for whom our prayers would be offered up in vain. And in asking for the forgiveness of their sins, we should be asking for more than God has promised to bestow. But unable as we must feel, without express revelation, to know which amongst all sinners are in a case so hopeless, we have every encouragement to pray earnestly for all, with entire trust that God will give us our petitions, to the full extent of his gracious promises.

Other particulars of our holy confidence are these. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." We feel assured, that through the strength of our heavenly Father, we can resist sin effectually, renounce it heartily, and never henceforth consent to it wilfully. We guard ourselves, by the grace of God, so watchfully, so resolutely, so continually, that "that wicked one," our adversary the devil, cannot prevail against us. Again, "we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." We have no misgiving as to the wisdom of our choice, as to the reality of our heavenly calling, as to the glory that is prepared for God's children, as to the misery which awaits the wicked world. Again, "we know that the Son of God is come," we have no doubt that God's own Son has been manifest in the flesh, has revealed to us the truth, and has imparted unto us the knowledge of it; and that "we are in him that is true," not holding a false religion, but a true one, not trusting in a false Christ, but in a true one; not serving false gods, but the true God, and living not a life of mere delusion, but one that is eternal.

Thus then let us live, thus let us behave, thus let us converse with one another, as they that will not suffer the idols of the world, its false gods, its false wisdom, its false joys, to be put for one moment in competition with that which we are quite certain is the truth. Hush, let us say to those who speak or act as if it were a question whether the Gospel be the truth, we know that it is true, we cannot allow it to be doubtful, we cannot hear it called in question without fearlessly avowing our conviction that it is the most certain of all certain things. Heaven and earth shall pass away. But Christ's word shall not pass away. Idols perish. But God remains God for ever.

Exhortation to stedfastness in love and in doctrine.

1 The elder unto the elect lady, and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

2 For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever:

3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world,

who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed.

11 For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak *†* face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

¶ Or, *gained*: Some copies read, *which ye have gained, but that ye receive, &c.*

† Gr. *mouth to mouth.*

§ 680. *Christian friendship the communion of saints.*

This Epistle addressed by St. John to "the elect lady," some eminent female Christian, "and her children," not only contains a profitable portion of Christian doctrine, but also sets before us an instructive pattern of Christian correspondence. How delightful it is for friends thus to "love in the truth!" How sweet to be thus beloved by all them "that have known the truth!" How pure and constant, and lively, that affection, which is for the sake of the truth that "dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever!" This is love whose desires are for "grace, mercy, and peace," in behalf of the beloved object, for such blessings as come "from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love;" real blessings not imaginary, abiding not transitory, desires not selfish, for our own pleasure, but aiming at the eternal happiness of each other.

And like to these are also the joys of true Christian friendship: "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father!" How much better ground for joy is this, than if the children of our friends were growing in stature, increasing in riches, or gaining in credit with mankind! How much more kind to remind each other of the one commandment of the Lord, than of the manifold engagements of the world! Oh let us never cease from mentioning to each other this duty of Christian love! Oh let us never forget that this is love, that we walk after God's commandments! To be doing the same things, even those which God requires, to be growing in the same graces, even those which God imparts, and to be walking in the same doctrine, even that which we have heard from the beginning, this is the true communion of saints on earth, this is our way to dwell together in heaven.

There we shall part no more. There we shall run no risk by reason of temptation. There we shall be exempt from the many perils which here beset us. Here are deceivers, there none; here gainsayers of Christ, there none. Here is antichrist, here are teachers who assume our Lord's authority, to pervert his Gospel, to destroy the souls which He died to save. How much need then have we here of watchfulness, if it were only that Christ's faithful ministers might not lose, by losing us, their full reward! How carefully must we abide in the doctrine of Christ, if we would have "both the Father and the Son;" the Father being rightly known only by the teaching of the Son! How firmly must we refuse our countenance to such as "bring not this doctrine," nay not so much as receive them hospitably, nor wish them prosperity in the name of the Lord; lest we become partakers of their evil deeds!

These are our present duties. These are our present difficulties. No wonder that we need often each other's help, comfort, and encouragement, both by letter, and by conversation face to face. No wonder that the apostle, and his beloved converts, looked forward to their friendly meetings with the most joyful expectation. But whether they met on earth in this instance is unknown. Whether we shall ever see again in the flesh the face of friends who are at a distance, is uncertain. So much more, if it be possible, let us strive to meet in heaven. Whichever way we are bound here to travel, or wherever constrained to stay, we may then always have the satisfaction of thinking, that we are on our road to a place where we shall be sure to meet, where we shall be always "face to face," and where our joy will indeed be full.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN. 1—14.

St. John commendeth Gaius and Demetrius; blameth Diotrophes.

1 The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things, that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey, after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

|| Or, truly.

† Or, pray.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

‡ Or, mouth to mouth.

§ 681. *That we should follow not the evil but the good.*

Here is another Epistle of St. John, which under the form of a private letter, provides edification for the whole church. Here is another instance in which the apostle expresses how he loves "in the truth," how he wishes for others' health and prosperity in reference to their souls, how he rejoices in the spiritual proficiency of his converts, how he desires to guard them against false brethren, and to encourage them in that which is good. Let us hence learn to regulate our affections by the truth, to love all others for this reason, that Christ loved them and gave Himself for them. Let us not fail to rejoice greatly when we hear a good report of those we love, that they are walking in the truth. Let us not refrain, out of false shame, from expressing to others our wish that they may prosper and be in health, even as their souls prosper; meaning that the soul's health is the most important, that for which alone all other health and prosperity is chiefly of value.

No greater joy than this had St. John, none would he more recommend to us. He felt it for his spiritual children, his converts. We must feel it as far as possible for all our Christian brethren. We must be glad when we hear of instances, in which they have proved the excellency of their faith by the abundance of their charity. Thus did Gaius in his hospitable entertainment of Christian brethren, strangers to himself, but dear to him for their work's sake. For these were preachers of the Gospel, who went forth for the glory of Christ's name, taking nothing of the heathen to whom they preached, and therefore the more dependent on the help of Christian brethren. Do we trust that we should have received them like Gaius, gladly and helped them forward on their journey, in such sort as befitted their godly errand? Let us prove, that we have the heart to do so, by now doing what is as nigh to this as we can, by kind attentions to those who minister to ourselves, and by contributing abundantly to the support of those who minister among strangers abroad.

If the Christian conduct of Gaius gave such joy to St. John, how must he have been grieved by the arrogance, ambition, and tyranny of Diotrophes! How must it have pained his heart, to think that he should have to give sentence against the evil deeds, and malicious words, of one who was in the same church with Gaius and himself! But even the wickedness of Diotrophes may be not without its use, if it become effectual for a warning to the church. "Beloved, follow not that which is evil." Let us never love "to have the preeminence." Let us never refuse to receive those who have authority. Let us never add to our own sins, by forbidding the good deeds of those who would fain do good. No, let us follow that which is good. Let us walk with Gaius, and Demetrius, and the children of God, in the way that St. John has taught, in the way that Christ has gone before. Then shall we have the praise of all whose praise is worthy to be had. Truth itself could then speak well of us, if we were truly good. The words of the apostle would rise up in the judgment, not against but for us. And believing his record now, we should find it to be true at the last. Let us rejoice to think that the day is at hand; that we shall shortly see him, and speak face to face. "Peace be to thee," he has once written, in God's name, to every one of us. Oh that he may then be able to repeat the salutation! Oh that we may then receive, and give, the joyful greeting of the saints amongst each other, by that new name to be then given unto each, which no man knoweth, except those who receive it. See Rev. 2. 17.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE. 1—11.

That we must contend for the faith against deceivers.

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called :

2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

6 And the angels, which kept not their first estate,

|| Or, *principality*.

† Gr. *other*.

1 Zech. 3. 2.

but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

§ 682. *The evils of disunion, false doctrine, and false teachers.*

St. Jude prays for mercy, peace, and love, to be multiplied unto the very same persons, whom he exhorts that they "should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." There is then a way of maintaining truth, without stirring up strife. Nay there is a way of contending for the faith without breaking peace, or hindering love. God grant that we may find this path so often missed! God grant that we may be neither misled by error, nor yet arrogant in our defence of truth, neither indifferent to the unity of the faith, nor yet inclined to narrow the common salvation!

We shall scarcely wonder at the repeated warnings contained in the Epistles, against the many forms of false doctrine, and many arts of false teachers, if we consider what great hindrance hence arises to the healing influence of the Gospel amongst mankind. The mere fact that Christians are at variance at all, as to what is the true Christianity, has in all ages of the church proved a stumblingblock to the world. But to this must be added the dishonour done to God, and to his Gospel, by the extravagance of many of the false creeds which have prevailed, the mischief done by the least of falsehood, in any of them, and the gross scandal which has arisen from the unholy lives, and manifestly corrupt motives, of many who have been concerned in devising or upholding them. It is to this last matter that St. Jude here chiefly refers. God forbid that any such as these should ever minister in our own beloved church! God open their eyes, if any such be found, either in the church or out of it, and bring them to contrition and confession, repentance and amendment of life!

"Before of old" they have been described in prophecy, and their condemnation plainly therein set down. See Isa. 8. 15. Ungodly they are, having no love of God in their hearts, but presuming on his love to sin the more. They deny "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ;" denying in words that He is God, or denying in their lives that He is their Lord, by living in wilful disobedience to his commands. When we are exposed to risk of being corrupted by their false doctrines, let us call to mind how many warnings God's word contains, recording as it were beforehand the sentence of those who sin wilfully, after having enjoyed the knowledge of the truth. Let us remember how the Israelites were destroyed in their unbelief, by the same Lord who delivered them out of Egypt. Let us observe what we are here taught, of the angels who fell away from their state of blessedness, how God is keeping them in misery for the present, unto condemnation in the end. Let us lay to heart the example of them of Sodom and Gomorrha, whose sufferings may give us some faint notion of "eternal fire." Fleshly lusts led them astray. "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh." And further they "despise dominion," wherein it seems they resemble the fallen angels. "And speak evil of dignities," which is what even an archangel durst not do of Satan. "But these speak evil of those things which they know not," railing at the truth which they have never tried, or at the teachers of the truth whom they have never heard; at the same time corrupting themselves by sinful indulgence in those natural appetites, which they have in common with the brutes. Oh how great is the woe awaiting those who thus transgress, and who mislead others into the like transgressions, like Balaam, for the sake of filthy lucre, or like Core for gratification of their pride! God defend us from all such attempts upon our faith! God deliver us from the like wiles in our own deceitful hearts!

False teachers, and their condemnation further described.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which

were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

23 And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

§ 683. *How we must live to the glory of Christ.*

Charity means love. And "feasts of charity" were love feasts, meals eaten in the congregation by all the members together, in token of their mutual affections. What black spots in feasts so fair were these hypocrites whom St. Jude describes, men who dared to intrude into the solemn assembly, merely in order to feast themselves! How like were they to clouds without water, professing as they did to teach the truth, and yet not teaching it! How like to "trees whose fruit withereth," nay rather without any fruit at all, dead in both senses, fit only to be rooted out! "Raging waves of the sea," these also help to shew what such false teachers are, whose lying lips foam out "their own shame." And so likewise do "wandering stars," which after a time are lost to our view; for in like manner there is reserved to these hypocrites "the blackness of darkness for ever."

And not only is their character represented by these lively images, not only has their condemnation been signified beforehand by the things which befel the Israelites in the wilderness, and the fallen angels, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Enoch also, as St. Jude assures us, distinctly prophesied of them, when he spake of the Lord's coming, "with ten thousand of his saints." Even as long ago as in the seventh generation from Adam the particulars of that judgment were set forth. All that are ungodly will be then convicted before the Lord and his saints, "of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." How must it then fare with these "murmurers," these "complainers," these who walk "after their own lusts!" How must it then fare with the many who set up their own will and wisdom in opposition to the will and wisdom of the Lord, and find fault with what He does, dispenses, or reveals! How must it fare with any or with all, whose "mouth speaketh great swelling words," in daring contradiction of the words spoken by the Lord, who give to men the honour due unto their Saviour, in order to get present gain unto themselves! "Behold, the Lord cometh." This was true so many thousand years ago. This should have been enough, from that time to this, to put to silence the foolishness of men, and to put an end to their wicked works. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." May we be counted in that number, and thus rejoice in the tidings of his coming!

The apostles also had often spoken beforehand of these false teachers and false brethren, describing them as "mockers," abounding under the last dispensation, "who should walk after their own ungodly lusts; men "who separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit." How amply are their words now fulfilled! How many of professing Christians in all ages have been mockers of one another, nay and some of God! How many have walked after their own lusts! How many have caused divisions, or enlarged or continued them! How many have been sensual! How few spiritual! Let us examine, are we ourselves now living up to the instructions here given us by St. Jude? Are we building up ourselves on our most holy faith; becoming

daily a more fitting temple for the indwelling of our God? Are we praying in the Holy Ghost, in that devotion of heart and earnestness of desire which the Holy Ghost inspires? Do we keep ourselves in the love of God, stedfastly fixing our affections upon Him, and noting in Him how greatly He loves us? Are we looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; watching anxiously for his coming, and fully persuaded that when He comes, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord? And under these convictions do our hearts yearn with compassion over our erring brethren? And even those who are most hardened in iniquity do we try to save, like brands out of the fire; not without fear lest we hurt ourselves by drawing nigh to them, not without a salutary abhorrence of the infection of their sins?

These are things in which we must frequently and closely examine ourselves, to see whether we are right in the faith, and zealous in the service of our Lord. These are things, in which whilst we take pains to keep ourselves, we must remember that He, and He alone, can keep us from falling; yea, can present us "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Therefore to Him, "the only wise God our Saviour," let us diligently ascribe all "glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Yes, let this be the great object of our heart's desire, to glorify Christ, and God in Him. Let it be for this that we desire to save our brethren. Let it be for this, even more than for our own gain, that we desire to save ourselves. Or rather, let us look upon the glory of our Lord as our own greatest gain. For is it not indeed ours? Have we not by inheritance a share in it? Or rather, are not we his? Are not we, our souls and bodies, our service in the flesh, and our reward in heaven, all purchased by his blood, all ordained for his glory?

Grant, heavenly Father, that the study of thy word may raise in us a concern for thy glory! Grant that whatever part of it we begin or end, we may in all ascribe the praise to Thee!

THE REVELATION OF S. JOHN THE DIVINE. 1—3.

The author, and the subject, of this book.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the

testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

§ 684. *The duty of studying this book.*

God the Father gave this "Revelation" to Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, in order for Him "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." Such is the origin of this book. Like every other good gift, it is of God's giving. And it is given unto us through his Son. And the way in which it has been given is this, Christ "sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." This is he who in the Gospel which he wrote "bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw." See 1 John 1. 1, 2. The same apostle who had been appointed to certify to the past, was also privileged to reveal things yet to come. And this he does throughout this book, chiefly by means of figures, similitudes, and types; a kind of language which serves to prevent collusion, and cuts off all occasion of suspecting it, in the fulfilment of the things foretold.

Let us consider then, that each several figure, sign, or symbol, is to be interpreted in the like sense throughout the whole book. Let us exert ourselves to understand their meaning, both in order that we may cherish a more lively expectation of things yet to come; and in order that we may the more clearly discern the proof of the foreknowledge of God, in the words which have already come to pass. The more obscure the figure is in itself, so much the more pains ought the faithful to take that they may understand God's promises, and so much the more heartily to glorify God in their manifest accomplishment. Let us both study what is here written, and hold fast what hence we learn. Let us delight to see in all that is here set forth, "the testimony of Jesus Christ." Let us read and hear, in the full persuasion, that the time when all will be fulfilled is at hand. And may the blessing which is here promised rest upon us! May God help us to understand! May God help us to believe and to obey! May He make us patient in suffering, when it shall be a time to suffer with Christ! And when the hour of triumph shall have come, may He make us to share the glory of the Lord!

St. John addresseth the seven churches in Asia.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia : Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him¹ which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne ;

5 And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, and the ¹first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, ²and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath ³made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 ⁴Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

¹ Exod. 3. 14.² 1 Cor. 15. 20. Col. 1. 18.³ Heb. 9. 14.⁴ 1 Pet. 2. 5.⁵ Matt. 24. 30.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last : and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

§ 685. *That we must hear and obey the words of Christ.*

This book is addressed by St. John "to the seven churches which are in Asia." Under which name he also signifies all churches every where. For the number seven is used commonly in this book to signify the whole of any thing; even as in this same versc, "the seven Spirits" mean the Holy Spirit of God, in all his fulness and perfection. The blessing here pronounced upon the church is grace, and peace, from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; from the Father "which is, and which was, and which is to come," from the Holy Ghost, or "the seven Spirits which are before his throne," "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Which last expression may allude both to his overruling the kingdoms of this world, as shewn in the fulfilment of this whole prophecy, and also to his being "King of saints," ch. 15. 3, who as saints are themselves for their excellency "the kings of the earth." For so has Christ made us even to be "kings and priests unto God and his Father," having "washed us from our sins in his own blood;" such was his love towards us! "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Thanks be to Him for having loved us! Thanks be to Him for having washed us from our sins! Oh that we may shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives! Oh that we may magnify his glory and enlarge his dominion, both by our own devotion, and by our zeal for the devotion of our brethren!

"Behold, he cometh with clouds," in like manner as He ascended into heaven. See Acts 1. 11. "And every eye shall see him." Not one of us shall be able to avoid that sight. Oh that we may not wish to avoid it! Oh that we may not be numbered with them "which pierced him!" Oh that we may be amongst those who shall rejoice, when "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him!" "Even so. Amen." May we have grace to join in this petition of St. John. May we be glad to think of our Saviour's second coming to judge the world! He is "Alpha and Omega." These are the first and the last letters of the language in which this book was written, here used to signify that our Lord is before all things and after all things; that He is, and was, and is to come; in one word that He is "the Almighty." Thus might even the letters of each book we read remind us, that Christ is from eternity to eternity, and raise our thoughts to Him in some such strain as this: Lord, be Thou the first and last in all my actions, let me in all begin and end with Thee!

The writer of the Revelation here tells us that he is our brother, a companion in tribulation of those who suffer for righteousness' sake, and "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ;" one who on earth suffered with Christ, and hoped to reign with Him in heaven. He was "in the isle of Patmos," which appears to have been a place of banishment, to which he had been sentenced for his preaching of God's word, and bearing testimony to Jesus Christ. And he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." On the Christian Sabbath, in the midst of his devotions, he was quickened to a supernatural discernment of the heavenly objects, which throughout this whole book he describes. Let us attend, that we may have the benefit of the inspiration which he enjoyed. Let us imagine that we could hear suddenly behind us that great voice, loud and clear, as of a trumpet, which said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Let us read with as much attention, as we should listen with, if we were to hear it. Let us be thankful that the things spoken have been written in a book for us to read. Let us consider that what thus was sent to the seven churches in Asia, was sent also to ourselves. Let us know that He who sent these warnings and encouragements, by the means of his Apostle, could force them, if he thought fit, at this moment, on our own unwilling ears. Let us remember that we must hear his voice at the last. And let us now obey his words, that when we hear Him really speaking to ourselves, it may be in a tone of gentleness, and with words of joy.

The vision of one like unto the Son of man.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; ¹ I am the first and the last:

18 *I am* he that liveth, and *was* dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

¹ Is. 41. 4. & 44. 6.

§ 686. *Of having a lively notion of the presence of Christ.*

The sense of seeing, and the sense of hearing, are both made to help in conveying to St. John a due impression of things heavenly, to be by him written down. Both may assist us in conceiving aright, of what God would by his means reveal to us. Could we imagine ourselves to hear the heavenly voice? Let us imagine also that we could see, as we turn round, the heavenly sight, the seven golden candlesticks, and “one like unto the Son of man” in the midst of them. Those candlesticks, let us observe, are the churches. And the stars which “he had in his right hand” are the angels of the churches. It is amongst us that our Lord is present every where. And in his right hand He holds those of us, whom He has appointed to rule over the rest. How much more highly should we honour them, than we commonly do now, if we could see our Lord Himself thus upholding them! How much more highly would they themselves esteem their office, how much more humbly feel their own unworthiness! What am I, they might well think, each within himself, that I should be a star in the right hand of Christ? And what are we, even all the members of his churches might no less profitably reflect, what are we, that Christ should be in the midst of us?

And what, if we now could see Him, as St. John saw Him? “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;” as God is also described in the prophet Daniel, to signify that He is “the Ancient of days.” Dan. 7. 9. “His eyes were as a flame of fire;” to shew us by their brightness, that He can discern all things. “And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,” to represent the fierceness of his judgments, when He shall tread down all enemies under his feet. “And his voice was as the sound of many waters;” so powerful above all other sounds to command the attention of the hearers. Besides the stars in his right hand, the angels of the churches, He held in his mouth a twoedged sword, the word of God, see Heb. 4. 12; these two, the living ministers, and the everlasting Gospel, being the chief ordinances, by means of which He gains his victories, and makes his light to shine. “And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength;” no other object being bright enough to give us any suitable notion of the majesty of our Lord.

Let us then endeavour to see Him as here described, in clothing like that worn by the Jewish priesthood, to signify that He is our great High Priest. Let us frequently imagine Him to be present, with all this manifestation of great glory. Might not the very thought serve to check our rising passions, to silence our idle words, to suppress our selfish thoughts, and to make us in point of every evil propensity no other than as dead men at his feet? Nay, might not our thoughts, our conception of his presence, amount almost in effect to the same thing as if we saw Him; faith rendering us as certain that He is really present, and that He has his attention really fixed upon ourselves? “Fear not,” is his encouraging address, to every one that believes in Him in earnest. “Fear not,” though I am indeed, as thou heardest me declare, “the first and the last,” I am also “he that liveth, and was dead,” the Word that was made flesh; the Lamb that was slain; “and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen;” most certainly is this true, I live for ever; “and have the keys of hell and of death,” can unlock their doors, and say to them who are therein, Arise. Fear not therefore; but hope, and trust. Fear not; but love. Fear not; but obey. “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” Most carefully did St. John fulfil this commandment. Let us also do diligently all that Christ has commanded to us. Then should we have no cause to fear, though our eyes were to behold his presence. Then will He use for us the keys of hell and of death, not to shut us in, but to let us out for ever.

Lord, let us now live as in thy presence, that we may hereafter enter into thy glory! Let us dwell with Thee in holiness, whilst we yet have time; that we may reign with Thee in joy to all eternity!

The epistle to the church of Ephesus.

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, be-

cause thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

§ 687. *The promise to them that overcome.*

In each of these seven epistles to the seven churches, the whole church is addressed in the person of its angel, or chief minister. So much have they to answer for who are set over the rest! So deeply ought the rest to feel concerned in the warnings and exhortations which are here directed to their ministers. And in each epistle it is written, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." So that it is the Holy Ghost who saith these things, which St. John writes by the direction of One like unto the Son of man. Wherein the Son and the Holy Ghost act as One. And these things, which are said to these churches in particular, are said to all, in all churches, until the end of time, even to as many as have an ear wherewith to hear. They are to be profitable for warning and encouragement, under all the dispensations of trial, which are afterwards in this book foreshewn. May God quicken our hearing, our understanding, our affections, that we may not only hear his words, but mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may not only know his will, but also love to do it; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Be it observed then that Christ knows our works, He fails not to note the labour, and patience, of those who suffer or exert themselves for his sake. He is well pleased when we cannot bear them that are evil, when we consort with them no more than is our duty for their good. He commends us when we prove all things, so as to reject them which would deceive us by false doctrine. He approves when it is for his name's sake that we bear patiently the afflictions which are in the world, and labour without fainting for the glory which is in heaven. But in the midst of all these praises, what a charge is this, which is here brought against "the angel of the church of Ephesus," to have fallen away from the love he had at the first! What a common case for a Christian, when first awakened, to feel a high degree of affection and devotion, and then to flag in the warmth of love, even though he persist in the course of duty! What a rebuke, and disappointment, and disgrace, to be reminded from whence we are fallen, to be turned back to do the works we did at first, and to feel the feelings which at first we felt, when we ought by this time to have gone on, far, far towards perfection! Nor is to love enough. We must also hate what Christ hates, we must abhor what Christ abhors. We must abhor evil; not wicked men, but wicked works, the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, not themselves. Who these were is not exactly known. But this is certain, that they were workers of wickedness. And this we must remember is our duty, to feel hatred and abhorrence against sin, as well as desire and love towards that which is good. Else will He "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," come unto us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of its place. This has happened at Ephesus. The church, which there once flourished, is no more. God grant that it may not happen to us also! God grant that the angels of our church may do all with the same ardour of affection, as when first the Gospel dawned upon the darkness of the land! God grant that the candlestick, which holds the light of truth in the midst of our beloved country, may shine more and more unto the perfect day!

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life; which is in the midst of the paradise of God." What this is we know not. But we may suppose that it is food which nourishes both body and soul; and that it must signify the enjoyment of at least the same happiness, be that what it may, which was at the first provided for man in Eden. Would we know with certainty? Let us strive to overcome. Let us put on the whole armour of God. Let us fight manfully against the flesh, the world, and the devil. Let us be always on the watch against sin. Let us be continually praying unto God that He would for Christ's sake give unto us the victory, by the help of the Holy Ghost. Then we shall enjoy those good things which pass our present understanding, yea, we shall be filled with all the fulness of God. Let us thank Him for what He has already given us. Let us feel assured that He will hereafter give us infinitely more.

Epistles to the churches of Smyrna and of Pergamos.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest,

even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

¹ Numb. 25. 1.

§ 688. *The great gain of overcoming in our trials.*

Unto the angel of the church of Smyrna our Lord describes Himself as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." For these were circumstances well suited to encourage the afflicted members of this church, in their "works, and tribulation, and poverty." Amongst them were blasphemers, calling themselves Jews, but in reality belonging to the communion of Satan. And "the devil," by means of these his agents, would be allowed to cast some of them into prison, for their further trial. Which state of tribulation was to last "ten days," that is to say, ten years. For a day seems to be the symbol of a year, both in the Book of Revelation, and in that of the prophet Daniel. But they of Smyrna, though they were "as having nothing," were "yet possessing all things;" they have here that promise given them, which might make them to be "always rejoicing." 2 Cor. 6. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." And He who promised, had Himself been dead, and was then alive. He had Himself been faithful unto death, though He was alive for evermore. Having then his promise thus secure, let us fear none of those things which we may be called upon to suffer whilst on earth. What matters it whether it be for days or years that we are here afflicted, if we shall in the end have to rejoice throughout all eternity? Or if even our lives should be required, and our death be compassed by the enemies of the cross of Christ, how little need it grieve those who are solemnly assured, that they "shall not be hurt of the second death," not be "cast into the lake of fire?" Ch. 20. 14.

To the church of Pergamos, as to the rest, our Lord declares, "I know thy works." He was aware of its dwelling "where Satan's seat is." In a city noted for its profligacy there was a church which held fast the name of Christ; there were Christians who denied not the faith of Christ, even in the days when by professing it, they exposed themselves to the risk of being slain. Happy Antipas, to be called by Christ Himself, "my faithful martyr!" Who would not gladly suffer all the martyr's pain, that might become partaker of the martyr's crown? And yet this church was not without its faults. "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges," threatens to use it against them quickly, unless they had the grace to repent. And their faults were these, that they had amongst them some who held the doctrine of Balaam, tending to sanction idolatry and fornication, and also some who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, "which thing," our Lord adds, "I hate." So that He not only hates their evil deeds; ver. 6; He also hates their evil doctrines. And we too must not only loathe iniquity in practice, but also abhor falsehood in doctrine. And of all false doctrines, we must especially hate those, which tend most directly to the dishonour of God, and to corrupting the practice of man! But whilst we hate these doctrines, and cannot bear so much as to keep company with such as hold them, let us still continue to be in charity with all men. Let us do violence to our own feelings of repugnance towards some, if we may by any means do good to any.

And let us hear what awaits them that overcome! "To eat of the hidden manna;" that food of angels which was signified by the manna in the wilderness. "A white stone;" the token of acquittal! And "a new name;" the token of new honours, of new joys, of a new inheritance! A name "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it;" so utterly is that heavenly state above the comprehension of all others, excepting those who actually enjoy it! Oh that we may receive that new name, that white stone, that hidden manna! Oh that we may love what Christ loves, and hate what Christ hates, and enjoy what He enjoys for ever!

The epistle to the church in Thyatira.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman ¹ Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all

the churches shall know that ² I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 ³ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

¹ 1 Kings 16. 31.

² Jer. 11. 20. & 17. 10.

³ Ps. 2. 9.

§ 689. *How the burden of Christ is light.*

This was no small praise for the church at Thyatira, that their last works were more than the first. May He who knows our works, and service, and faith, and patience, may He in like manner see them always on the increase! Whatever we now do in the way of serving God, may we daily serve Him more and more! However heartily we now believe, however patiently we now endure, may we daily grow in the strength of our convictions, and in the steadfastness of our resolutions, in the clearness with which we see the joy awaiting us in heaven, and in the meekness with which we receive the ills that happen to us on earth!

And yet "the Son of God" has notwithstanding a few things to say against this church. He charges it with suffering a false prophetess to teach and to seduce his servants into sin. So that a church has to answer for it, if it so much as allow false doctrine or wicked practices; such practices as fornication, such false doctrine as this, that it was lawful to eat things known to have been sacrificed to idols. For all such departure from the truth is itself a kind of spiritual adultery; it is unfaithfulness towards Christ on the part of his spouse the church. Most graciously does He in such a case give space for repentance. But unto them which will not repent He declares that He will visit for these things, that He will cast "into a bed," not for pleasure but for pain, lay low, "into great tribulation;" that he will kill "with death," that is to say, utterly destroy; so as that all the churches shall know that He "searcheth the reins and hearts." And He "will give unto every one" according to his works. What can be a more fearful sentence than this last, to them whose works are evil? What sinner would not pause in sin, if he could be made to feel the certainty that Christ knows his works, and will hereafter reward him accordingly?

The Judge however speaks very graciously to the rest. He lays no heavy burden upon them that have not listened to the false prophetess. For them "which have not known," not professed, these deep things, as the deceivers call them, or "depths of Satan" as they really are, to them the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light. Let them but hold fast, till He come, what they have, the truth once delivered to the saints. Let them contend earnestly for the faith; and also fight manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Let them keep their Lord's works unto the end. And behold He will share with them his own glorious inheritance, even that which He received of his Father. This it is which makes our utmost burden really light, the weight of glory with which it is compared. To be joint heirs with Christ in his kingdom. To have a portion of his "power over the nations," that power of which we see some small proof in that prevalence of the Gospel over the kingdoms of the earth, which is foreshewn throughout this book, and which will hereafter be made manifest when our Lord Himself shall be seen coming in heaven, with power and great glory. Then will He give "the morning star," even Himself in all his brightness, to them that overcome. See Ch. 22. 16.

Lord, when all the power of all the nations of the earth shall be as nothing in thy presence, when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up, when they perish, but Thou remainest, may it be our lot to abide with Thee for ever! Lord, remember us when Thou comest into thy kingdom. Remember, Lord, thy servants for good. See Luke 23. 42. Neh. 13. 31.

The epistle to the church in Sardis.

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. ¹ If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief,

and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the ² book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

¹ 1 Thess. 5. 2. 2 Pet. 3. 10.

² ch. 20. 12. Phil. 4. 3.

§ 690. *The peril of profession without practice.*

See in the angel of the church of Sardis, and in the church itself, the fearful case of profession without practice! See an instance of that formal religion, which is often highly esteemed among men, whilst it is abomination in the sight of God! It is to have a name as though we were alive, when in truth we are dead. It is to be addressed as Christians, when we have no faith in Christ, no sense of his love in dying for our redemption, no delight in doing his will, no hope of sharing his glory. God preserve us from such spiritual death! God grant that we may both glory in the name of Christian, and make it the business of our life to be Christians indeed! God help us to set before our eyes this thought, that Christ knows our works, that He who "hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars," all the ministers, and all the churches, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost wherewith to quicken them, He knows whether we be indeed alive to righteousness, or dead; whether our works are or are not according to his commands!

But if we would have God help us, we must use the utmost of our diligence to look into these matters for ourselves. We must take pains to know our own works. We must search and examine into our lives, to see whether we live according to God's word. Whereinsoever we find ourselves wrong, there we must be watchful to amend. And whereinsoever we have reason to hope that we are right, therein we must watch that we grow stronger and stronger. Calling to mind what we have received and heard from God, we must hold fast stedfastly whatsoever we find ourselves doing agreeably thereunto; we must repent effectually where we feel that we are transgressing his will. And let us observe, that if our works are not "perfect before God," this is wrong. If there is any one duty omitted, any one thing done less faithfully, less zealously, less affectionately than we ought, this is wrong, this must be repented of, this must be amended. Who then "can tell how oft he offendeth?" Ps. 19. 12. Who has not need to pray with David, "Lord, cleanse thy servant from secret faults?" Who, when he has done all, is not constrained to say to God, I am at best an unprofitable servant? See Luke 17. 10.

If we repent not, we cannot be forgiven. If we amend not, we cannot have repented. If we call not to mind God's word, we are not likely to amend. If we watch not for the coming of Christ, we are sure to be taken by surprise. He will come on us as privily, as unexpectedly, as a thief in the night, when men sleep. We shall no more be aware of his approach than they who slumber up to the moment of the thief's coming. Oh what must then be our feelings of dismay, regret, and shame! Our treasure irrecoverably lost, our life eternal only endless misery, our Lord and Saviour now condemning us as unworthy; and all because we would not watch!

But in the decline of zeal, and love, and watchfulness, which is laid to the charge of Sardis, there were "a few names" which had not "defiled their garments." There were a few Christians whom Christ counted worthy to walk with Him in white. And this we trust has been true in the most corrupt of churches, in communities of Christians, whose name that they lived has been belied by the fact that they were dead. "A few names," and they not blotted "out of the book of life," but hereafter to be confessed by Christ before the Father and before the angels! What can any church now existing hope for more than this? What can we ourselves pretend to, having so many, as we notoriously have, who professing the Gospel of Christ, deny the power thereof? But among few can I be one? This is a question which every one of us may well ask. What ground have I to hope that my name is not blotted out of the book of life? I have been once for all enrolled as a member of Christ's church. Am I now a living member thereof? Do I shew the signs of life? Do I repent and amend, do I watch and pray? Do I love, and hope, and rejoice? Do I count myself unworthy of the least of all God's mercies? Do I strive to become less unworthy? Do I trust that God will receive me, all unworthy as I am, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord?

The epistle to the church of Philadelphia.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth;

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God *which is new Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him my new name*.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

§ 691. *The description of our heavenly inheritance.*

To each of the rest of the seven churches, our Lord describes Himself by some of the signs or symbols, which were noted in his first appearance to St. John, in the midst of the seven candlesticks. See ch. 1. 13—16. But to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, He announces Himself as being holy, and true, and as having the key of David, applying to Himself these words of Isaiah: "the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." Isa. 22. 22. In most of the other churches, his threatenings have been literally fulfilled by their wasting or utter destruction. In this, and in the church of Smyrna, his promises have been no less signally accomplished, by their preservation up to the present moment. No man has been yet able to shut the door opened by the Lord. The Christians of Philadelphia, though their strength has been but little, have not denied the name of Christ. And they exist as a Christian church at this hour, in the very centre of Mahometan oppression, when Ephesus is little better than a heap of ruins, when the few Christians who remain in Pergamos have to send to Smyrna for an officiating minister, when in Thyatira there are no Christians left at all, in Sardis still a few, but neither minister nor church, and when the desolation of Laodicea is complete. Who can doubt that in like manner these prophecies will be accomplished in all Christian churches unto the end of time; in the wasting and destruction of those which are unfaithful, and in the sparing of those, which however small their strength, have done what they could? See Mark 14. 8.

Of these promises to Philadelphia there is some part to be yet further fulfilled. The unbelieving Jews, who already may in many instances have been moved to worship Christ, by the conviction of his having loved his church, shall some day, in larger numbers, and by a more signal triumph, be won to the Christian communion. Philadelphia will most probably be then one amongst the churches, which having kept Christ's injunctions to perseverance, and having been kept by Him from the temptations which try all that dwell upon the earth, shall make its light to shine both to Jew and Gentile, to the praise of the glory of the Gospel of God. Let us then like that church keep the word of Christ, and not deny his name. Let us observe what He told them, that behold, He is coming quickly. Let us hold fast what we have, yielding no one point in our Christian proficiency which we ever once have gained, and suffering no one, either man or devil, through our sloth, ignorance, or wilful disobedience, to take our crown, to deprive us of our heavenly inheritance.

And let us think of what that heavenly inheritance is. Let us note by how many images Christ tries to help us in conceiving how bright is that crown of glory. We shall be made pillars in the temple of God, at once supporting and adorning the courts of our God. And we shall "go no more out." We shall "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Ps. 23. 6. And as monuments of God's grace and of our Saviour's triumph, there will be written upon these pillars the name of God, and the name of God's city, "the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God," and also Christ's own "new name." And what though we cannot now comprehend the whole amount of glory and of joy which here is signified? Though we know not what the new Jerusalem is, or how it shall come down from heaven; we are thankful to be assured that it will come. Though we cannot tell how much of honour is to be conveyed in these new names, we are sure that it is abundantly beyond all we can desire. And God having described the happiness of heaven in the language of worldly felicity, it is for us who have no just ideas of things that are purely spiritual, to be comforted, and encouraged, and gladdened, by these signs and symbols, these images and similitudes. God grant that whatsoever we see glorious upon earth may remind us of things more excellent in heaven; our temples, of his courts above, our finest cities, of his new Jerusalem, our tallest pillars, of the lofty eminence in which He designs to set us, our highest titles, of the new name which He will then delight to give us!

The epistle to the church of the Laodiceans.

14 And unto the angel of the church || of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that,

thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 ¹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

|| Or, in Laodicea.

¹ Prov. 3. 11. Heb. 12. 5.

§ 692. *The sum of what the Spirit saith to the churches.*

In the Laodiceans we see how offensive it is to God to be lukewarm in religion. He in whom all the promises of God "are yea, and in him Amen," 2 Cor. 1. 20, He whose testimony is faithful and true, He who is the Son of God, begotten before all worlds, see Col. 1. 15, He had rather we were either hot or cold, than neither. To be cold is to be utterly destitute of faith. Now they that are such may sometime be converted. To be lukewarm is to know these things and not to do them, to be aware how God has first loved us, and notwithstanding not to love Him. And what further can ever make us love, if this does not? What language can sufficiently express the vile and loathsome aspect in which, if our affections are still unmoved, we must appear unto Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us?

It is commonly the case with the lukewarm, that they are proud in their own supposed sufficiency. They say that they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. They esteem themselves able to provide sufficiently for themselves, in the sight of God, by their own exertions. Hence they are not sensible of how much they owe to God for the redemption of the world. They have no lively sense of want supplied, and therefore no warmth of thankfulness towards Him, who provides all things richly for their salvation. First, we must feel that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor;" and we shall then be anxious to buy of Christ "gold tried in the fire," that treasure in heaven, which no length of use can impair, and which is rendered so much the more precious to our sense by the affliction we have to endure on earth. First we must be aware that we are "naked," we must feel ashamed, out of our sense of our own sinfulness, to stand in the presence of God; and we shall then resort to Christ for "white raiment," "the righteousness of saints," ch. 19. 8, that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness may not appear. First, we must be sensible that we are blind, that by nature we cannot discern the things of God, and we shall then press forward unto Him who is ready to sell us "eyesalve," that we may see, the grace of an understanding heart; and who in every case invites us to buy of Him, "without money, and without price." Isa. 55. 1.

They who cannot be won by kind treatment, may sometimes be reclaimed by means of punishment. They who when all things prosper continue lukewarm may have their affections raised to warmth by the furnace of affliction. And therefore the faithful Witness reminds the Laodiceans, "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Lord, when Thou chastenest us, may we take it for a token of thy love, and "be zealous therefore, and repent!" When Thou dost vouchsafe to stand at our door and knock, whether by sickness, or any manner of adversity, may we have grace to hear thy voice, may we make haste to open the door; and do Thou of thy infinite mercy come in as Thou hast promised, to sup with us and we with Thee! By this figure of a social meal, Thou hast signified thy kind communion with thy saints on earth. By a seat on thine own throne, Thou hast set forth the extent of their joint inheritance with Thee in heaven. Oh help us to overcome that we may share thy glory! Oh help us to hear what the Spirit saith both to the angels and to the churches, both to these seven in Asia, and to all churches every where, help us to hear, to understand, and to obey!

Now the sum of what "the Spirit saith" is this: Christ knows the works of all, and will judge accordingly. In affliction it is our duty to be patient; under persecution still to be faithful; in the corruption of a church, not to divide but to repent, and not to suffer them that corrupt. We must hate evil deeds. We must hate false doctrine. We must give none offence in any thing. We must profess the truth, and live up to our profession. We must love heartily, trust devoutly, serve faithfully. If we do these things, we reign with Christ for ever. If we do them not, we perish at his coming.

The vision of the throne.

1 After this I looked, and behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and

† Gr. they have no rest.

round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and † they rest not day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.'

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'

1 Is. 6. 3.

2 ch. 5. 12.

§ 693. *Worship in heaven.*

In this vision we have a lively representation of the worship which is paid to God in heaven, signified to us by what St. John saw and heard, by sights and sounds, which convey to us in a figure such notions of these things as we can at present form. And these figures appear to be in part the same as the pattern shewed to Moses in the Mount, see Exod. ch. 25, by which he was directed to make the tabernacle and all things therein; and in part to be the same as those figures which were revealed to Isaiah, ch. 6, to Ezekiel, ch. 1. 10, and to Daniel, ch. 7. 9. "A door was opened in heaven." St. John seemed to see as through a door into another world. And the voice which he had heard before, "as of a trumpet," ch. 1. 10, now invited him, saying, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." And immediately the apostle was "in the spirit," not beholding the things around him with eyes of flesh, but having the sights which he here describes impressed by revelation directly on his mind. May we have grace to see through faith with the assistance of this vision the things that are invisible, the majesty of God, his mercifulness, his justice, his power, and great glory!

The throne set in heaven, and one that sat on it, seem to signify the presence of God the Father. The likeness to a jasper and a sardine stone, represents the brightness and beauty of his appearance. The rainbow "in sight like unto an emerald," having the colours shining as in precious stones, reminds us of his covenant of mercy. The elders on their seats, or thrones, which appeared "round about the throne," were clothed in white raiment, and "had on their heads crowns of gold." In them therefore we see a symbol of Christ's church, elsewhere called "a royal priesthood." 1 Pet. 2. 9. And in their number there is probably an allusion to the twelve sons of Jacob, together with the twelve apostles of Christ, of whom He said that they should sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. See Matt. 19. 28. The lightnings, and thunders, and voices, out of the throne, proclaim God's power, and tell the wicked of his purpose to bring them to judgment. The "seven lamps of fire, burning before the throne," "are the seven Spirits of God;" by which is meant the Holy Ghost, and his manifold gifts. See ch. 1. 4. The "sea of glass like unto crystal," may perhaps mean the peace which pervades all heaven. For it is the very reverse of the troubled sea with which we are familiar on earth, "whose waters cast up mire and dirt," and which is declared to be an emblem of "the wicked." Isa. 57. 20. And the four living creatures, seem to be the same which were typified by the cherubim over the mercy seat, see Exod. 25. 18, and which were also seen in the visions of Ezekiel. 1. 10.

But however hard it may be to say what these several symbols signify, nothing is more clear, nothing more profitable for us to observe, than the work in which they are engaged. Let our devotion be like theirs, not occasional but continual: "they rest not day and night." Let our worship be paid in all humility: they "cast their crowns before the throne." Let our praises be offered up, not in rivalry with each other, but in harmony, in communion, in love. For so do the living creatures and the elders agree together, to give "glory, and honour, and thanks, to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever." This is the way they do in heaven. Oh that God who alone is worthy of all honour, who alone is "Holy, holy, holy," may give us grace thus to worship Him whilst here we dwell on earth, and may take us when we depart this life, thus to worship Him in heaven for ever! To Him be all the glory of all the things that He has created and preserved!

The vision of the Book and of the Lamb.

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, ¹ the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

¹ Gen. 49. 9.

§ 694. *The sorrows of the heavenly minded.*

It is by means of this book that the things "which shall be hereafter" are revealed to St. John, and through him to us. The book was seen "in the right hand of him that sat on the throne," to signify that He both knows all things that are to be, and also will surely bring them to pass. We must conceive of the book as written on seven separate sheets or skins, rolled up, after the manner of books in ancient times, one within the other; and each separately sealed as it was rolled up, so as to conceal all the writing on both sides. So unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out! So full of wisdom within and without are all his manifold purposes! In vain the mighty angel proclaims aloud, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Throughout all heaven and all earth, there is no one able; no one out of all whom God has created, competent to know his mind, or fit to be his counsellor. See Rom. 11. 34. This is one of the chief convictions to be impressed upon our minds by this affecting vision, our own utter insufficiency to scan the counsels of our Maker. When we hear men arguing about the doctrines of the Gospel, as if they knew better than God, when we are ourselves tempted to murmur at God's dealings, as if we could better tell than He what is most for our good, and for his glory, let us bethink ourselves of this sealed book; and let us remember that this is true of all the doings of the Lord, that no one is worthy to open them, so as to see what is therein.

The apostle "wept much" when he found this to be the case with the sealed volume. He had a real heartfelt desire after heavenly wisdom. He ardently longed to know what it was that was written in this book of God. Let us apply this to the anxiety and interest we feel in the study of spiritual truth. Have we ever wept much over the difficulties we meet with in God's word? Has it cost us a single tear to find some parts of it beyond our comprehension? Has it ever occurred to us to grieve at the thought, of how many of our fellow creatures there are, to whom the whole is at this moment as a sealed book? Oh that we could have the heart to weep for lack of knowledge, to weep much for the misery that is in the world through ignorance, through ignorance of God, and of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus! Oh that it were for sorrows like to these that our tears make haste to flow; and then God would dry them up!

Thus it was that St. John was comforted. "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." "Judah is a lion's whelp," were the words of Jacob to his sons, when he told them what should befall them "in the last days." Gen. 49. 1, 9. This was to shew the majesty and sovereignty of this tribe. And still more it was to signify that of this tribe should come the Messiah, according to the flesh. It is by a like figure that the ever blessed Son of God is here called "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." And He is also called the Root of David, because it was from this that David's glory chiefly arose, the having the Messiah for his Son. But though for his might, majesty, and dominion, our Lord might be spoken of as a Lion, it is by the symbol of a Lamb that He is commonly represented, throughout this whole vision and whole book. "In the midst of the throne," or as it is expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," Heb. 8. 1, close to the four living creatures, and surrounded by the four and twenty elders, "stood a Lamb as it had been slain;" even He "that liveth and was dead;" ch. 1. 18; having seven horns, the sign of perfect strength, and seven eyes, the sign of perfect insight into all things. "Which are," or represent to us, "the seven Spirits of God," the Holy Ghost, who is One with the Son, as well as One with the Father, and who, through the Son's intercession with the Father, see John 14. 16, is "sent forth into all the earth." No one knoweth the Father but the Son. See Matt. 11. 27. And no one searcheth the deep things of God but the Spirit. See 1 Cor. 2. 10. And when no one else in all heaven and earth was worthy, the Lamb "came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." Happy are they to whomsoever the Son shall shew what is written therein. Happy are they in whom the Spirit shall work the faithfulness, and patience, and love, which are therein recommended!

The worship of the Lamb.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand

times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; *

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

¶ Or, incense.

¹ 1 Pet. 2. 9.

§ 695. *How devoutly we ought to worship Christ.*

The Lamb has no sooner taken "the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne," ver. 7, than all present fall down and worship Him. This is to shew us what great joy is really felt in heaven, and what ecstasy of thankfulness and love ought to arise in our own hearts whilst we are here below, on contemplating the revelation which God has given us of Himself, and especially of his dealings with his church, through the means of his blessed Son our Lord. And shall we be silent, when all things else unite to praise? Shall we fail to fall down before the Lamb, and offer Him our thanksgivings and our prayers, when they who are most nigh unto the throne of God's majesty, think it no robbery thus to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father? No; let us be aware that these elders, with their harps and golden vials, are representatives of what we ought to be ourselves. They stand for the whole church of God. To their harps we ought to tune our voices, and sing our glad psalms, and hymns of joy. Their vials full of odours, which vials "are the prayers of saints," ought to contain our own among the rest. And the new song they sung on this occasion, is such an one as we ought to sing anew, every hour of our lives, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." Ch. 1. 5, 6.

This song seems to prove beyond dispute, that the four and twenty elders, are symbols of the redeemed of the earth. For this is the reason they assign why the Lamb is worthy to take the book, namely, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." And besides this they speak of reigning "on the earth;" which may mean either the manifold advantages which the faithful have over the unbelieving in this life, or some signal manifestation of the sovereignty of Christ which is as yet to come, and in which his people are appointed to share. In any case we may learn hence to praise our Lord, both for all that He has done for us already, and for all that He has promised to do hereafter. He has redeemed us. This is done. We have been bought with a price. We are his. We have been made unto our God "kings and priests." How is it that we care for trifles, when we have a kingdom in heaven prepared for us? How is it that we dare to be in any thing unholy, when we are all bound, in all things, to minister to the glory of God?

Rather let us at once enter as far as possible into the possession purchased for us by our Lord; into the joys of holiness, into the pleasures of loving God and loving man. Let us shew forth in our lives the praise of our Redeemer. Let our conduct, as well as our lips, express to all around us, how anxiously we desire to glorify Christ. This is the work of angels round about God's throne. This is what St. John saw them doing. And the words in which he heard them joining with the living creatures and the elders, declared "the Lamb that was slain," to be worthy of sevenfold praise, worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And not in heaven only were these words of worship uttered. Earth answered; yea, all things in heaven and in earth, and every where, burst forth in one harmonious strain; offering worship "unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Oh that we may join heartily with them that "said Amen!" Oh that we may fall down with them that then fell down, in devout adoration towards Him "that liveth for ever and ever!" O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, how greatly do we rejoice to offer unto Thee our praises and thanksgivings, instead of the scorn which Thou didst once meet with upon earth, instead of the pain and shame which for our sakes Thou didst endure! How thankful do we feel for all thy love! How earnestly do we desire to be able to express duly all thy goodness!

The four first seals opened.

• 1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld,

and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, ¶ A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

¶ The word *chenix* signifieth a measure containing one wine quart, and the twelfth part of a quart.

† Or, to him.

§ 696. *The uses of prophecy.*

The great importance attached to the sealed book leaves no doubt that its contents must relate to no less a subject, than the history of the Christian church; and that it refers to the affairs of the nations of the earth, only as they are connected with the concerns of the kingdom of heaven. The nature of the book already explained, as consisting of several sheets, rolled up one within another, leads us to think, that the events signified under each of the seven seals, must follow one another in order of time; though each period may in some measure partake of the character of those which are before and after it. The four living creatures saying severally "Come and see," as the four first seals were opened, shew us the interest in the thing revealed which is felt, by those in heaven, and which ought to be felt also by us on earth. And whereas, though the book was written on both sides, see ch. 5. 1, there is nothing read when each seal is opened, but seven visions are presented, one on the opening of each seal, to St. John, in heaven; this shews us that the book is no real book, that the horses are not real horses, but that these and the other objects, are used as figures to represent the true events. May He who alone was worthy to open the book, now open our hearts to understand its meaning, and enable us to profit by what He has here shewed unto us of the things concerning his church!

Under the first seal is contained the first signal progress of the Gospel, during the times of the apostles, and for some ages afterwards. The "white horse" implies triumph. The bow is elsewhere used in Scripture for part of the armour of our Lord, to signify his victory over sin and sinners. See Ps. 45. 6. The crown is the token of his having conquered, though He is yet to conquer more. For so we find in the latter part of the Book of Revelation, the same figure of one riding on a white horse, one who is "called Faithful and True," and who also, so great was his success, has this name then written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Ch. 19. 11—16. Under the second seal is contained the period when this peaceful conquest was succeeded by controversy carried on amongst Christians, with the utmost pitch of animosity. And the rider on the fire coloured horse shews the spirit which prevailed when Arians and their opponents, and many other conflicting sects, used literally to go to war for their respective tenets. The Mahometan desolation of the church seems also to be here alluded to. The third seal comprises the period of gross ignorance which next followed throughout the Christian church. The black horse signifies spiritual darkness. The balances, the high price of the wheat and barley, and the injunction to be careful of the oil and wine shews the scarcity then prevailing; a scarcity not of this world's food, but a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord." Amos 8. 11. The fourth seal relates to the period next following, when the kingdom of death and hell was upheld by the most savage persecution. And the pale horse, with his rider, are symbols of those prodigies of cruelty, who for the maintenance of their spiritual tyranny, delighted to wield the sword of temporal dominion.

How exactly these images have been fulfilled, is known to those who are acquainted with the history of the times. How clearly their fulfilment makes manifest the wisdom and power of God, this is the lesson which all ought hence to learn. For thus this book is to the Christian, what their series of living prophets was to the Jews. Reaching as it does from the birth of Christ to the end of time, there is no period in which Christians may not find some part fulfilling, some already fulfilled, and some yet to come to pass. Let us therefore listen attentively to the word of the Lord. From the fulfilment of the past let us turn with fresh diligence to the contemplation of the future. Let us consider how differently it would have fared with the Jews, if they had known the time of their visitation. Let us be ever on the watch for ours.

The fifth and sixth seals opened.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her ||untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 ¹ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand.

|| Or, *green figs.*

¹ Isa. 34. 4.

² Luke 23. 30.

§ 697. *The sign of the Son of man seen in heaven.*

Under the four first seals we see the character of the Christian church, in four successive periods, first its primitive prosperity, next its agitation by the strife of controversy, next its darkness in a famine of God's word, and next its wasting under the sword of its own oppressive rulers. When the fifth seal is opened, St. John beholds under the altar "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God." These are they who bare witness unto death, at the time of the Reformation, and afterwards, not severing themselves from the church, but purifying themselves in it, and also labouring to purify the church, according to God's word. These are they, who from that time to the present, have endured for the truth as it is in Jesus, the scorn, and malice, and tyrannous hate, of them that kill the body but cannot kill the soul. It is to the Scriptures that they have uniformly appealed. It is for the word of God that they have been slain. It is to their testimony we owe it, under the blessing of the Lord, that there is no longer so sore famine of that word in the land, that the darkness is in some measure removed, and that "the beasts of the earth," ver. 8, the rulers who were the instruments of spiritual oppression, are withheld from persecuting, to the like extent of cruelty, the saints of God. But they that kill the body, cannot kill the soul. See Matt. 10. 28. And these souls appeal to Him that sitteth on the throne; pleading, out of conformity with his will, for the manifestation of his glory, and the punishment of evil doers. Surely judgment, though delayed for a season, will come to pass in the end; when the number of them that suffer for righteousness' sake shall be fulfilled, and the fury of their oppressors shall be returned sevenfold into their own bosoms.

That period of retribution is ushered in by the opening of the sixth seal, which corresponds to a season yet to come, spoken of in like terms by our blessed Lord whilst yet on earth, in one of his last discourses with his disciples. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." Matt. 24. 29, 30. And in like manner the same event is alluded to in his words addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." Luke 23. 30. The great convulsion of nature, here described, can mean no less than some such visible interference of the arm of God in the world of sense, as shall convince men, beyond possibility of doubt, that the Lord is indeed at hand. The scoffer shall then no longer be inclined to say, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. 3. 4. The earth, instead of its wonted steadiness, shakes as if for fear. The sun, instead of being the source of light, becomes itself "black as sackcloth of hair;" and the moon red as blood, instead of pale as silver. The stars of heaven, that shew so lofty in the firmament, are seen to fall like untimely fruit. The firmament itself, so wide as it is spread, so immoveably as it seems to be fixed, departs "as a scroll when it is rolled together." Whilst the mountains and islands, and all the most solid parts of the earth which we inhabit, are "moved out of their places." Here the scroll and the fig tree, and the blood and the sackcloth, are figures. And the sun and moon and stars and heaven are realities, and shall be really thus changed in their appearance. No wonder that men of all ranks and conditions, here described under seven different heads, shall be smitten with dismay, when these things take place. No wonder that they who here are the most mighty shall then tremble, they who here are most eminent in station and authority, shall, if they have abused their talent, be then most anxious to hide themselves "from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." For "who shall stand when he appeareth?" Mal. 3. 2. Who shall hope, when the great day of his wrath shall come? They only who now look to Him as their Saviour. They only who now obey Him as their Lord.

The sealing of the twelve tribes.

* 1 And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

§ 698. *The limit of God's mercies.*

In our Lord's account of his own coming, as related in the Gospel of St. Matthew, He speaks of sending his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, to gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. See Matt. 24. 31. This is the very thing which is described in this chapter, as taking place before the opening of the seventh seal, after that signal manifestation of Christ's coming, which coincides with the opening of the sixth. In this interval we behold "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth," "to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea," to fulfil the destruction of which such fearful warning has now been given. But we see also another angel, "ascending from the east," the side of light and life, "having the seal of the living God," being commissioned to set apart them that are his. And we hear him crying with a loud voice to the four destroying angels, so that they hold back the four winds of the earth, and stay the fury of the breath of God's displeasure, that it should not yet consume the things which He has made. Here then God's judgments are delayed once more, and wait, not for the fulfilling the number of his martyrs, see ch. 6. 11, but for securing the multitude of his saints. Till Lot was out of it, Sodom could not be destroyed. Ere Jerusalem was levelled to the ground, the disciples of Christ must flee unto the mountains. And before the earth and the sea and the trees can be hurt, before things most exposed to the violence of winds can be given up to their fury, before this world can be brought to utter desolation, the servants of God must be sealed in their foreheads, they must be so marked with the name of God as to be known for his, that they may escape the wrath to come. Then there will be once more a manifest distinction between the church and the world. They that hate Christ in their hearts, as many professors now do, will then be avowed infidels, and they that really love his name will be universally known to be his disciples.

The twelve thousand out of each tribe seem to signify, in the first place, that very many of the Jewish people, so highly favoured by Jehovah, will stand in the judgment day on the right hand of the Judge. And it is not unlikely, that their sealing at this period, may have reference to the very signal conversion of the Jews, which other passages of Scripture incline us to look for, nigh unto the time of our Lord's coming. God's purposes concerning them have been gracious from the first. However greatly they transgress, a remnant is always left. However obstinately they resist his will, a way of reconciliation is always open. However widely they are dispersed, He who scattered will again gather them together. However nigh they seem to being lost in the last convulsions of the world, they will be sealed for security in great numbers, even thousands out of all their tribes.

Amongst these tribes, however, though twelve are mentioned, there is no notice of the tribe of Dan, and the tribe of Ephraim is called by the name of Joseph. This may be because these two, especially the tribe of Dan, were among the foremost in the practice of idolatry. And the tribe of Levi, which had no lot in the land of Canaan, is here reckoned for one among the twelve; to signify that a due proportion of its members will have their share in the heavenly inheritance. If then this sealing of the tribes may also signify the children of the faith of Abraham, the spiritual Israelites, the Christian church, let us hence learn to be very watchful and diligent for ourselves, that we give no reason for our own names to be left out. Twelve tribes only are recounted; and in each only twelve thousand sealed. God's mercies must be limited, though not by number, yet by his justice and by his truth, and by his word. He has graciously revealed to us the way of salvation. If we are found in it, we are safe when others perish. If we fall away from it, we perish when the rest are safe!

The innumerable multitude of saints in heaven.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto

me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

¹ Ch. 21. 3.

² Isa. 49. 10.

³ Isa. 25. 8. chap. 21. 4.

§ 699. *The happiness of them that shall be saved.*

The sealing of the twelve times twelve thousand takes place on earth. See ver. 3. The multitude who are here described as worshipping in heaven are probably the same parties seen after their deliverance from the burden of the flesh. And if so, the tribes of Israel must be taken for a symbol of the whole Christian church; and the persons sealed, for all that constitute the fulness of the Gentiles as well as the converted of the Jews. These St. John beholds afterwards, and, God be praised, they were "a great multitude, which no man could number." God be praised, they were "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." They "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes," to signify their righteousness, see ch. 19. 8, "and palms in their hands," to shew that they were conquerors. And they "cried with a loud voice," and ascribed their salvation unto God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And the angels who have joy in the repentance of sinners, and the elders, and also the four creatures before mentioned, all "fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. And in their worship they say "Amen," by way of joining with the saints to attribute their salvation to God and to the Lamb. And they ascribe unto Him the sevenfold praise of "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might."

But we may know more about this multitude, which was "arrayed in white robes." For one of the elders told St. John what they had done, and whence they came. They "came out of great tribulation," out of a world full of sin and misery. Probably some of them in particular had been released from it, at the period when God's judgments were just about to burst upon the inhabitants of the earth. And they had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," of that very Lamb whom they then were worshipping. These then, it is evident, are believers in Christ. These it is evident put their trust for salvation in his blood. These look upon Him as the Lord their righteousness. See Jer. 23. 6. These think it not impossible with God, that blood should cleanse from sin. These deem that even for sinners to be counted righteous, and made holy, is not too hard for the Lord. "Therefore are they before the throne of God." Not for works of righteousness which they have done themselves, but because it was in the Lamb's blood that they washed their robes. And yet neither is it without pains of theirs, without much tribulation suffered, much work and labour of love performed, that they stand at last before the throne of God, having by faith washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

But oh how light is our utmost burden of affliction, how trifling our utmost toil, when compared with the wages of eternity, with the glory that shall be revealed in us! To have pleasure, and no need for pain to make it sweet; neither to hunger any more, nor to thirst any more, and yet to be filled with all the fulness of God. To have no scorching of the sun, nor of any other heat to light upon us for harm; but to be led in safety by the Lamb Himself, who is also the true Shepherd, see John 10. 11, and who shall feed us in the midst of "living fountains of waters." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Here how many do we shed in infancy, that age which seems most free from care, most full of joy! Here how many do we shed afterwards for the consequences of our own faults and follies, of our forbidden passions indulged, of our unreasonable hopes disappointed! Here how many more have we need to shed for God's majesty affronted, and his honour wronged, both by ourselves, and by our brethren all around! But there God shall turn our mourning into joy. There our joy shall last for ever.

God grant that it may be ours! God grant that we may share with saints and angels the delight of dwelling in his presence, and the glory of telling forth his praise!

The angel with a golden censer.

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God : and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer : and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth : and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

6 And the seven angels, which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

¶ Or, add it to the prayers.

§ 700. *The acceptance of prayer.*

When the seventh seal is opened the inmost sheet of the whole book is now loose and unrolled. This therefore refers to events the last in order, of all that are foretold in the sealed book. And the greater part of it is occupied with God's judgments, inflicted on mankind, for their many and grievous transgressions of his will. The severity of these judgments, the awe which they are fitted to awaken in our minds, and the affectionate concern in our behalf, which they raise in them that dwell in heaven, seem to be signified by the solemn silence which took place "about the space of half an hour." Well does it become us also to be silent before God, when we think of his wrath hanging over the world we live in. When we see the seven angels stand before Him, and the seven trumpets given into their hands, and when we know that the sounding of each trumpet shall be followed by tribulation, and anguish, and woe ; well does it become us to pause, and to reflect, to be thoughtful, and serious, and still.

But though, when we are occupied with matters like these, all idle words, all vain conversation, seem peculiarly out of place, there is a language which even then we do well to utter, there are words which even then are better than silence ; they are the words of prayer ; it is the language of devotion. While the seven angels were preparing themselves to sound, behold, "another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." This angel was as a servant in attendance on our great High Priest, who officiates in our behalf for ever ; and who supplies, out of the abundance of his own worthiness, that incense which can alone make our imperfect prayers fit to be offered on the altar which is in heaven. "And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Thus the prayers of the saints are made acceptable in the sight of God the Father, through the mediation of his Son our Lord. And the ministering spirits, who do his pleasure, can scarce have an employment more full of interest to themselves, than to wait on Christ in his office of our Priest, when He is engaged, out of his good will towards us, in forwarding our petitions unto the throne of grace. Most earnestly, we may suppose, many will begin to pray, when the time of the seventh seal shall have arrived. But why then do we not pray most earnestly also now ? We are sure that the things written will come to pass. We have no doubt that the woes will be fulfilled. We agree to it that the saints will be sealed, and that the Son of man will be seen coming in the heaven with power and great glory. And how is it that we are now able to continue cold and careless, in spite of all these stirring motives ? It is want of faith which makes us wanting in devotion. And want of faith will still hinder the prayers of many, even when the Son of man shall come. See Luke 18. 8.

And therefore, in this vision, "the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth." The same live coals, which serve in heaven to burn incense acceptable unto God, are poured out in indignation on this lower world, here to consume the adversaries, here to forebode judgment against pretended friends. There are Christians now which never pray. And there will be such Christians then. And it is against these, which name the name of Christ, but depart not from iniquity, see 2 Tim. 2. 19, and follow not after holiness ; see Heb. 12. 14 ; it is against these that He most plainly bears his testimony, and most loudly denounces woe. Oh that we may now hear with reverence of the voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake ; and so not fear when they shall really come to pass ! Oh that we may now pray with faith and constancy, and offer up our prayers through the mediation of our Lord ; and so not fail to have them granted !

The first four trumpets.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

§ 701. *God manifest in his works.*

Upon the plan of interpretation here adopted, these trumpets relate to judgments which are yet to come on the inhabitants of the earth; being manifestly enclosed within the seventh seal, which according to the received notion of the shape of the sealed book, could not possibly be opened till the first six were done with. And further it appears probable, that the sun, and moon, and stars, and earth, and sea, and rivers, and other objects here made mention of, are not to be understood as figures, but are used for the things themselves. For "waters," when used figuratively, mean, as we are told afterwards in this book, "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Ch. 17. 15. Whereas here we read that "many men died of the waters;" which seems therefore to mean not people but water. And again, the "great star" is said to be "burning as it were a lamp;" where the lamp being the figure, the star probably means a real one.

These things being premised, it appears that after the sealing of the saints, that signal interference of God's power in this world of his creating, which begins at the opening of the sixth seal, will go on unto the end of the seventh. The clouds will no longer "drop fatness," Ps. 65. 12, on the thirsty soil, but will burst in showers of "hail and fire," substances like unto great hailstones and live coals, "mingled with blood," perhaps the blood of the many fowls of the air and beasts of the field, who will perish in these deadly storms. And a large portion of all the verdure, whether of grass or trees, will be burnt from off the face of the earth. Another fearful and destructive visitation will be in the form of a burning mountain cast into the sea; whereby its waters will be in great measure turned into blood, the creatures which are therein will die, and the ships also on its surface will be destroyed. Another will be the falling of a great star from heaven, brilliant in light, but poisonous in its influence; and therefore called Wormwood, by way of signifying that it will make bitter the rivers and the springs, even so as to cause the death of those that drink of them. The fourth judgment, and that a very terrible one, to be inflicted on the children of men, is the darkening of the sun, and moon, and stars, so that neither day nor night should have more than a certain portion of their customary light. And these are things of which men will have due warning, by what is described at the opening of the seal next before this seventh. What was then seen to happen suddenly, may as suddenly cease. The judgments, of which notice was then given, may be suspended during the sealing of God's faithful servants. But the things which are here described seem as if they were to become a sort of second nature, to last during the woes that happen in the trumpets following; a season of dismay and gloom, during which the earth and its guilty "inhabitants" wait, like a convicted criminal in his cheerless dungeon, not looking for deliverance, but dreading death.

"But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." Exod. 10. 23. Such was their exemption from the plagues of Egypt! Such will be the consolations of God's faithful servants, when this fearful state of things takes place in the midst of the city spiritually called Egypt. See Ch. 11. 9. Of these things we may now form some faint conception, not only by reference to what befel the Egyptians, but by considering the impression made upon our minds by such storms as now we witness, or by earthquakes, and volcanoes, comets, and eclipses, such as are according to the present laws of the material world. If these, though we may be able to account for their appearances, are apt to terrify the hearts of the unfaithful, how much more will these great prodigies in heaven and in earth! Science, which now helps to make the careless at their ease, as it helps also to raise the devotion of the faithful, as it accounts for God's wonders by discovering his laws, will then serve only the more to confound the one in their sins, and to encourage the others in their hope and trust, by making them know that his laws are interfered with by Himself. And men will no longer be able to be ignorant whether they will or not, that all these things were made by the word of the Lord, and that according to his word they must come speedily and utterly to an end! See 2 Pet. 3. 5—7.

The fifth angel sounds.

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them; but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment, *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall

not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.

11 And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name || Apollyon.

12 One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

|| That is to say, *A destroyer.*

§ 702. *The plague of strange animals.*

Before the sounding of the fifth trumpet, an angel was heard to fly through the midst of heaven, proclaiming woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the three remaining trumpets. This leads us to expect that something yet more terrible is now to be denounced. Accordingly, when the fifth angel sounds, St. John sees a star fall from heaven unto the earth, even Satan, whom our Lord saw fall like lightning from heaven. See Luke 10. 18. "And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit." By which figure we understand that he is allowed to let loose, as from the storehouse of evil, some new form of affliction upon the children of men. This appears first in the shape of noisome smoke. "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." A swarm of venomous reptiles, of power like that of scorpions, to last about the same length of time, "five months," and in their shape and properties unlike any that have ever before been heard of, proceed to inflict torment on all, except God's sealed saints. These we may suppose to signify, that God will really then raise up against mankind some new and most excruciating torment, by means of a new animal creation. The four first trumpets relate to sufferings to be inflicted by fearful changes in the world which is inanimate. This fifth is a sore plague by means of living creatures. The sixth, as we shall see presently, relates to woe dispensed by that which is more cruel to mankind, than storm or tempest, serpent or wild beast, even by means of man himself.

That these locusts are a figure, or symbol, is made probable by means of many of the particulars here mentioned. Their having shapes "like unto horses prepared unto battle," their having on their heads "as it were crowns like gold," something like to crowns, made of something like to gold, their having faces "as the faces of men," and "hair as the hair of women," teeth as "of lions," "breastplates as it were breastplates of iron," wings sounding like the horses of war chariots, tails like unto scorpions, and stings in their tails; all these images united seem plainly to point out some such instruments of wrath, as have never yet been seen on earth. And what can be more reasonable, than that He who has used these several things separately, as means of aggravating by their violence, deceitfulness or venom, the misery which is in the world through sin, should unite their qualities as the world draws towards a close, to form one terrific scourge for sinners. And what can be more just, than that a part of the creation, which has suffered so sensibly by man's transgression, and which ever since has been so cruelly used by man, should thus rise up as it were in judgment against its oppressors, and make them long for death in vain?

"The locusts have no king," said Solomon in the book of Proverbs, 30. 27. But these have a king over them, and his name in our tongue is the Destroyer. That is to say, they are under the direction of the fallen angel, whose delight is in our fall and endless destruction. So great is the agony arising from their sting; that in those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it. Self destruction, the last resource of the rebel against his Maker, shall by some marvellous means be made impossible. But what will seem most strange of all, these locusts, who are to alight not on grass and trees but men, will be restrained from hurting those amongst mankind, who have "the seal of God in their foreheads." So broad will be the line of distinction in that day between the world, and Christians indeed! So hardened will the wicked still remain, that even this distinction will not bring them to repentance. See ver. 20. 21. Oh that God, if it should be our lot to be alive when these sad trumpets sound, may have caused his seal to be put upon our foreheads! Oh that He may now make our brethren to repent!

The sixth angel sounds.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the

horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

|| Or, at.

¹ Ps. 115. 4. Re. 135. 15.

§ 703. *The destroying armament.*

Well might David decide, when he had to choose between famine, pestilence, and war, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." 2 Sam. 24. 14. Of all the sufferings to which we are liable in the flesh, there are none so grievous as those which we inflict upon each other. And of all the horrors which violence, fraud, lust, and cruelty united, can inflict, there are none more terrible than those which follow in the train of war. And since warfare, besides the other sins it has to answer for, has been one chief means of oppressing God's faithful servants, therefore the voice which commands to loose this scourge upon the earth, is heard to issue from the golden altar, under which St. John had seen the souls of those, who "were slain for the word of God." Ch. 6. 9. The four angels who ministered in this judgment, had been prepared for a settled hour, and day, and month, and year, "for to slay the third part of men." And "the number of the army of the horsemen" is also fixed beforehand, to be "two hundred thousand thousand!" So exactly can God order the times and seasons; and constrain, for the execution of his judgments, the unruly wills of sinful men! So fitly will He employ against the enemies of the truth, that very arm of flesh, and those very weapons of worldly warfare, in which they have been used to put their trust, and by which they have delighted to persecute his saints!

But in this armament, besides the ordinary horrors of war, there will be new armour, new horses, new implements of destruction, more powerful than ever yet were seen on earth, both to terrify the senses of the beholders, and also to take away their lives. And in the formation of the horses, and in the array of their riders, so fearful, so strange, so supernatural, it will be manifest that this destroying army is one of the judgments of Almighty God. And yet men will refuse to own this truth, or refuse to act on this conviction. With the whole world thus in array against unbelief, the unbeliever will persist in sin. They that are not killed by these several plagues, will neither repent of their idolatries, of the dishonour done to God by their false religions, nor of their murders, sorceries, fornications, thefts, of their transgression of his will by their wicked practices.

This seems the greatest marvel we have yet heard of. These are the most horrible of all horrors, the most woeful of all woes; man impenitent, sinners obstinate, idols cherished, lusts fulfilled, in the very face of God's avenging angels, when his judgments are made manifest throughout heaven and earth. And that this should be the case with all "which were not killed!" That none of all those men should repent! Truly the world will then be ready for destruction! The vines of the earth will then be ripe for the winepress of the wrath of God! See ch. 14. 19. Somewhat of this obstinacy, much of this impenitence, we now often see with awe. But hitherto there are also many, God be praised, many who repent and amend their lives. And as long as one such may be gained, as long as one more sinner may be saved from hell, one more saint sealed for heaven, we doubt not that God will still graciously put up with the iniquity which so fearfully abounds. Oh that many may make haste whilst there yet is time! Oh that God may shortly accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom! Oh that we, with all those who have departed in the true faith of God's holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in his everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Another mighty angel with a little book open.

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his left foot* on the earth,

3 And cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roar-eth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should

be time no longer:

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, 'Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

¹ Ezek. 2. 8. 3. 3.

§ 704. *A new train of prophecies is revealed.*

The little book, of which we read in this chapter, is in some sort a counterpart of the sealed book, of which all seven seals have now been opened. But this little book appears open from the first. That is to say, it does not describe in regular order, one after the other, the chief events foretold, but it gives several distinct views of detached parts and periods, answering to greater or less portions of the whole seven seals. And this is the method of other prophecies, especially in the book of Daniel; where the four great empires, most nearly connected with God's church, are first described under the symbol of an image, and then under that of four beasts; other parts of the same history being afterwards foreshewn by other visions, much in the manner of these which follow in this book. And this manifold chain of prophecy, we may observe, affords great additional weight of evidence to God's wisdom and power in his word; it being so many times more hard to conceive that any one except God Himself, and He all mighty and all wise, should have described beforehand what would happen in the world, by several separate sets of images, each destitute of all resemblance to the other, and yet all exactly fulfilled by the events.

This second book is seen in the hand of "a mighty angel," whose appearance is so like to what is assigned to our Lord, see ch. 1. 13—15, that we must suppose him to represent his divine majesty; and we might even have taken him for our Lord Himself, but that he is expressly called "another" angel. "He set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." This shews that the revelation, in which he ministers, concerned mankind in all quarters of the world. The loudness of his crying summons all to listen. The seven thunders uttering their voices, and the commandment to seal up the things which they uttered, teach us, that notwithstanding so much has been revealed, there are some secret things which we are not allowed to know. But if they are sealed, we may conclude that the seals will at length be opened. And we may be assured, for our comfort, that whatsoever God hides from us for the present, He will make known to us in due season to our greater joy. The solemn oath taken by this angel announces, in the most impressive manner, that the mystery which he has to reveal, would be completed at the same time as that of the sealed book, and that this would be at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, after which will be the end of time. Succession of events, such as we now experience, will then for ever cease. All things will be always present. Or rather there will be a state of things which cannot be expressed by present, past, or future. For of eternity we know only that it will not be time.

St. John is ordered to go and take this little book, by the same voice from heaven, which addressed him both before the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, and also before the opening of the sealed book. See ch. 1. 10, and 4. 1. This helps to shew that we have here a new train of prophecies. And further he is told that he must "prophesy again." And his taking the book, and eating it up, his finding it sweet to taste, but bitter to digest, this is after the manner of what is told us of Ezekiel. Ch. 3. And these things shew us, with what anxiety the prophets searched into what the Spirit within them did testify, of the sufferings and glory of Christ; see 1 Pet. 1. 11; even as one of them said, "as for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." Dan. 7. 28. May we grudge no pain which God's word may cost us, either to understand or to obey! And whether we find it bitter in convincing us of sin, or sweet in telling us of pardon, may we keep the matter in our hearts!

The two witnesses prophesy, and are slain.

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court, which is without the temple, † leave out, and measure it not: for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And || I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the ¹ two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain

not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

† Gr. cast out.

|| Or, I will give unto my two witnesses that they may prophesy.

¹ Zech. 4. 3, 11, 14.

§ 705. *The prosperity of the wicked for a season.*

This chapter seems to represent the Christian church in the act of witnessing to Christ, from the beginning of the Gospel, to the end of time. First the apostle is employed to "measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." But he is to leave out the court which is without the temple. He is to make a distinction between real Christians and nominal. He is to consider the first as living stones in God's temple. And the others, though they may set foot in the holy city, are not to be counted as citizens thereof. For some ages there was but little of such intrusion. Persecution from without rendered it a matter of danger, not of credit, to profess to be a Christian. But after a time the case was altered. The rulers of the earth professed faith in Christ. And henceforth, Gentiles, the worldly minded, as opposed to the spiritual Israel, were not easily to be distinguished from Israelites indeed.

The witnesses now prophesy in sackcloth. Usually when the church has had most worldly prosperity, it has also had most to mourn for in the sight of God. And this state of things lasts "a thousand two hundred and threescore days," which is the same as the "forty and two months;" during which the holy city is subject to the intrusion of the Gentiles. And as it seems clear, from the interpretation of a fulfilled prophecy of Daniel, that each day is the symbol of a year, we must consider that this state of things is appointed to last for at least twelve hundred and sixty years. See Dan. 9. 24. During all this period a community of faithful men is bearing witness to the truth unto an unbelieving world. Or rather they are two communities, for they are two witnesses, and the witnesses are not only "olive trees," to supply oil, the sign of grace and the means of light, they are also "candlesticks," and therefore they are churches. See ch. 1. 20. Now we know that there have long been two chief branches of the church of God, the eastern and the western. And we consider, that notwithstanding their grievous corruptions, they have preserved the two chief ordinances of Christian conviction, the ministry, or testimony of living men, and the word, or testimony of written revelation. And we trust that there have been in both of them, throughout nearly their whole existence, men of God, devoted to do his will, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. These spiritual communities, however grievously depressed, we take for the two witnesses in sackcloth. They wear sackcloth, because instead of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of Christ, it had come to pass, as the result of that the alliance, the kingdom of Christ was supplanted by a worldly dominion. They are represented as having power to devour the adversaries, because God has indeed all along taken vengeance on their enemies, visiting those who have corrupted and oppressed his churches, by plague and famine and all manner of disasters.

For a time however He suffered Satan to destroy them, and their bodies to lie as it were dead. True religion seemed for a season to be banished from the earth. They who pleaded for doing away with abuses of the church, were silenced, suppressed, or slain. And they who supposed that gain was godliness, who used religion for the mask of covetousness, pride, and strife, made merry with one another on their supposed success. This was the case, just before the time of our Reformation. Even burial was then refused to the dead bodies of Reformers. And it is also still the case wherever the wicked prosper; they triumph in iniquity. Wherever there is licentiousness, or cruelty, there is Sodom, wherever cruel persecution there is Egypt; where our Lord is crucified afresh, there is Calvary. Never may we provoke God's judgments, by evil entreating those who bear witness to his Son! Never may we close our ears against their testimony! never count them our enemies for telling us the truth! See Gal. 4. 16.

The witnesses revive. The seventh angel sounds.

11 And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain † of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his

Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which || destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

† Gr. names of men.

|| Or, corrupt.

§ 706. *Against being corrupted by the favour of the world.*

In applying prophecy to the history of the church, we must never forget how great a difference there is between what seems great in our eyes, and what is so in reality. And especially we must remember that our own church, and nation, and quarter of the globe, are each of them only one amongst many. Hence if we take the Reformation in the western church to be the revival of one witness after manifest death, we must wait for some like revival in the eastern church, ere we can consider this whole account to be fulfilled. And this it appears will happen ere the time of the end. For here the history of the two witnesses is brought down to the same period at which we left off in the sealed book, at the sixth trumpet in the seventh seal. And the connexion of the two histories is shewn by the remark, "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." This may be the time when all the saints, alive or dead, shall be caught up to meet Christ in the air. See 1 Thess. 4. 17. For these are the words which will then be heard from heaven, by the witnesses, "Come up hither." Great is the fear which falls upon the worldly minded in the church, when they see the witnesses revive, when the faithful servants of God again appeal to the word and to the testimony. Great is the dismay which at the present hour works secretly in many an unbelieving heart, at the sight of holiness perfected in the fear of the Lord. What will be felt when heaven opens, and the saints go up to glory? What will be felt when the earth trembles, when the dwellings that are on the earth are shaken to the ground, and thousands of their inhabitants perish in the ruins? How will their hearts sink within them! How will they give glory to God, though it be only out of terror, not for love!

And then the seventh angel sounds. The mystery of God is then brought to a close, even that which is the subject of this prophecy. The time of wrath is come for the punishment of iniquity, the time of grace for the rewarding of the saints. The temple of God is opened in heaven. And on the one hand there is seen the ark of his covenant, the pledge and token of his mercy; on the other there are the symbols of visitation for sin, "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." And thus the proclamation runs, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rulers shall no longer oppress and corrupt the church which they profess to protect. Aliens shall no more intrude into the holy city, and there pass for true worshippers of God. But all things that offend being rooted out, the angry being dealt with angrily, and they that destroy the earth being destroyed, God will take unto Himself his great power, Christ will reign on his own throne in righteousness.

Who therefore would not now prepare for judgment, that he may escape the wrath to come? Who would not now seek earnestly to be a member of Christ's kingdom, in order to reign then with Him for ever? Oh let us not be deceived by the world. Let us not be deluded by the prosperity of the wicked. Let us not be corrupted by favour pretended unto the church, on the part of those who are at enmity with our Lord. It is their pleasure to be hindering Christ's kingdom. It is his glory to be overruling them for good. And in the end it will be his triumph, at once to lay low them that oppose themselves, and to exalt them that are conformed, not to the world, but to his will. May this be now our endeavour, to be transformed to the likeness of our Lord! May this be then our exceeding great reward, to be made like Him at his appearing!

The vision of the woman and the dragon.

1 And there appeared a great || wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailling in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another † wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the

dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

|| Or, sign.

† Or, sign.

§ 707. *The sense of safety under God's protection.*

This chapter contains a second vision relating to the church, seen by St. John after his eating the open book. He beholds "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." This is the church as seen in heaven; for it is there, and not on earth that it is clothed with light, and crowned with the brightness of the firmament. But as St. Paul described himself to be travailling in birth until Christ was formed in the Galatians, ch. 4. 19, so here the church is said to be in pain "to be delivered." And in this we must think of the Jewish church as well as of the Christian, or rather we must conceive them both as one. Or it may be that in this vision especial reference is made to the church Jewish, and to that branch of the church Christian in which Jerusalem is situated, and to which most of the Jewish converts and their descendants, have belonged. For the sun and moon and stars can hardly fail to be an allusion to Joseph's dream; wherein, under these figures were represented the twelve patriarchs, and their father and mother. So that the woman has the whole family for her attendants. She is God's church under the Gospel, comprehending God's church under the Law.

In these her pains, which are here mentioned, let us see a token of God's anger manifest against sin, and an admonition of the anxiety we ought to feel for the spiritual birth of children unto God. To mourn with them that mourn, and to help them that are in trouble, is the Christian rule. But it is the practice of the enemy of souls to watch in our distress for occasion to inflict new sufferings, and to go about in our calamity seeking whom he may devour. And this is the other wonder that appeared in heaven; a representation of "that old serpent, called the devil," ver. 9, in the form of "a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." These heads and crowns seem to signify, that all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them, are by Satan claimed arrogantly for his own. See Matt. 4. 8, 9. These ten horns represent strength used for mischief. And further it appears probable that here is an allusion to that great empire, which was the last of the four foretold by Daniel; in which there were at the first seven crowned kings, and whose capital was seated on seven hills, whose ten last pagan emperors have been thought by some to be the ten horns here mentioned, whilst others have applied them to the ten kingdoms, into which the empire of Rome was finally divided. Certain it is that the whole force of the Roman masters of the world, was exerted, under Satan's rule, to suppress the progeny of the Christian church. Certain it is that her children, notwithstanding all the power of her enemy, were enabled, through the might of her spouse, their Lord, to set at defiance his attempts at their suppression.

To rule all nations "with a rod of iron," ch. 19. 15, is the same thing that is said elsewhere of Christ Himself. See Ps. 2. 9. Here as formerly in this book, ch. 2. 26, 27, it signifies the success of his saints, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. "And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." This shews us wherewith our safety, as against Satan, must consist; namely, in our being cherished in the arms of God, and defended by his fatherly protection. "And the woman fled into the wilderness." For thus it fares with the true church, whether assailed by persecution, or by corruption, from the hatred or from the friendship of the world; she prefers to dwell remote from pomps and vanities; "where she hath a place prepared of God." Happy are they who, under the pressure of temptation, can always resort with confidence to the arms of their Father which is in heaven. In the solitary places they are not alone. To them the wilderness blossoms as a rose. See Isa. 35. 1. However long be their appointed time, however manifold their tribulations, however severe their strife with sin, they can wait with patience for their end, for they are sure that the end is joy. For the present they are where God would have them be. Therefore they feel it good to be here. For the future they hope to be where God is Himself. Oh, how much better is it to be there!

The woman nourished in the wilderness.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having

great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

§ 708. *That Satan is always warring against our souls.*

The warfare of the church on earth is represented by this war in heaven. For it was in the midst of the vision of the woman in the wilderness, that St. John witnessed the battle between Michael and the dragon. Here then we have a sign or symbol of the vehement anxiety felt on one part by good angels for our welfare, and on the other by evil angels for our destruction. They are represented as fighting together, by way of shewing us the opposition that there always is between good and evil, and the warmth of affection with which we ought to cleave to the one, and to abhor the other. But in heaven there is in reality no such thing as strife. The casting out of Satan and his angels, "into the earth," shews us that this is the actual field of contention, and that it is concerning us that the strife takes place. Woe is unto us by reason of our adversary! Ere the fall of man he had been shut out from the abodes of the Most High. At our redemption he was cast down still lower; for the children of men were then plucked out of his grasp. And yet he has a short time allowed him to work evil on the earth, for our greater good, and for God's greater glory in his defeat. Therefore let us not be terrified by his wrath. Let us not be disheartened by the apprehension of his power. Let us listen rather to the loud voice which proclaims in heaven, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." It is the voice of the redeemed. They are the saints, that sleep in Jesus, rejoicing in their beds. See Ps. 149. 5. They are glorying in the deliverance of their brethren, in the silencing of their accuser, in the victory that has been won by the blood of the Lamb, in the testimony which his servants have borne by their word, and which his martyrs have sealed by their death.

But whilst the note of triumph and of joy already sounds in heaven, the dragon is still persecuting the church on earth. And the vision reverts to the woman flying into the wilderness, there to be nourished, and protected "from the face of the serpent," "a time, and times, and half a time," or a year, and two years, and half a year; which is the same as "a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Ver. 6. And these days are years. And this period is of the same length as that mentioned in the vision of the two witnesses. Ch. 11. 3. And if this woman answer to one of the two witnesses, this is probably the time during which the eastern division of the church is to exist in a state of great depression, but still preserved, still nourished, and hereafter greatly to revive. The water cast out of the serpent's mouth, may be the flood of corruption, with which the worldly rulers of that part of the empire, have tried to seduce those, whom their previous persecution failed to destroy. The earth swallowing up the flood, may be the multitude who shew favour to the church, and yet fall victims to the poison of the dragon, whilst the true children of Sion, whether favoured or oppressed, are still faithful to their King. Let us remember that the dragon is wroth with the woman, even unto the end. Let us consider him to be now at war with ourselves. With all, in all churches, who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," he never can nor will be at peace. Never therefore let us be at peace with him! Never let us listen to his deceitful words, saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Jer. 6. 14. Never let us cease to watch against his wiles! Never let us fail to resist his force! Never let us trust to our own strength for victory! Never let us doubt that through Christ we shall overcome!

The vision of the beast with seven heads and ten horns.

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the || name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were † wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking

|| Or, names.

† Gr. slain.

great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him * to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: ¹ he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

* Or, to make war.

¹ Matt. 26. 52.

§ 709. *The difference between real and apparent prosperity in the church.*

In this beast which St. John saw "rise up out of the sea," we have another representation of the Roman empire, that chiefest of all the kingdoms of the earth, which has also been most intimately connected with the history of the Christian church. The horns here wear the crowns, to shew that they mean kingdoms. And upon the heads "is the name of blasphemy," signifying the many offensive decrees which would issue from the city on seven hills, against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The leopard, the lion, and the bear, unto all which this beast is likened, are used in Daniel for symbols of the three empires preceding that of Rome, in which the power of all three was centered. See Dan. 7. 7. And accordingly the dragon is said to have given to this last "his power, and his seat, and great authority." The wounding of one of his heads as it were to death, has been thought, with great probability, to signify the conversion of the Roman emperor to the profession of Christianity, an event which seemed to give preeminence to the Gospel in the world. And then the healing of the wound consisted in that corrupting influence which Satan contrived to exercise over the church, through the means of its being connected with the empire. So that henceforth mankind so much the more wondered after the beast, so much the more worshipped the dragon; Satan being thus "transformed into an angel of light." 2 Cor. 11. 14.

During "forty and two months," or twelve hundred and sixty days, or years, up to the Reformation, it was not uncommon for the emperors and their courts to dictate false doctrine to the church. And men, whose lives in private were the very reverse of what Christ requires, took upon them to lord it over his heritage, to settle controversies by the authority of the state; often upholding falsehood against the truth, in matters closely connected with the honour of our Lord. Thus was the mouth of the Roman empire, though Christian in profession, guilty of no less than blasphemy against God. Whilst its armies at the same time were employed to support its edicts, making war with the saints, and overcoming them. Yea, men thought that they were doing service acceptable unto God, when they were shedding the blood of his martyrs. And all the "kindreds, and tongues, and nations," united, and will hereafter perhaps again unite, as with one voice, to magnify and glorify the dominion of man, to the disparagement of the sovereignty of Christ.

See herein how different is real prosperity in the church, from that which men are apt to esteem prosperous! The whole civilized world united in one empire, the rulers of that empire professing themselves Christians, undertaking to support Christianity, maintaining it, according to their view of it, by all the influence of all their force, and wealth, and station, and authority; this we might at first sight take for Christ triumphant, this we might suppose to be the establishment of his kingdom on the earth. But no, "if any man have an ear, let him hear;" let us consider this matter with attention. If these very rulers are evil livers, if their whole court is given up to luxury, if their creed is false, if their practice is licentious, if the pomps and vanities of the world are upheld in universal estimation, as of more worth than the joys of heaven; this is not the kingdom of Christ, this is the worshipping of the dragon under the authority of the beast. And they which support this system by imprisonment and the sword, will be brought to endless captivity and death. It is amongst those whose conversation is in heaven that Christ really reigns on earth. His subjects are they whom the others set at nought, upon whose patience and faith the others trespass, and whose names are "written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Let us hope that we are enrolled in that heavenly company. Let us watch, lest through our negligence our names be blotted out. See ch. 3. 5. And whilst we thankfully use, in furtherance of the Gospel, the help of such as are both great and good; let us steadily resist the corrupting influence, of such as speak for Christ, but work for Satan.

The vision of the beast with two horns.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give † life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, † to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

† Gr. *breath*.

† Gr. *to give*.

§ 710. *The abominations of the popedom.*

In the former beast we have seen a symbol of the power of the Roman empire, and of the kingdoms into which it was divided, employed in persecuting and corrupting the members of the church of Christ. This other beast, with two horns, represents the tyranny of that other Roman power, part temporal part spiritual, which arose, and practised, and prospered, under the name of Pope. His horns are like those of a lamb, to signify the affectation of humility, which has ever accompanied the most arrogant of his actions. His speech "as of a dragon," shews his craftiness and deceitfulness. "He exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him." For to no less than this do the pretensions of the Pope extend, the universal sovereignty of all the nations of the earth. And he employs his power in upholding the same pomps and vanities, the same preference of earth to heaven; thus making men "to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."

Another character of the Popish usurpation is the false pretence to working miracles; "which he had power to do in the sight of the beast," in which these deceivers were able to impose upon "them that dwell on the earth," and on the strength of which they upheld their plan of image worship, here called making "an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." For the ancient gods of the Roman empire were idols. And it was the policy of the Romish church to adopt images, not only as helps to devotion, but as links to connect the old religion with the new, baits to induce the heathen to become Christians. Thus they have given life unto the image of the beast, which had else under the Gospel been dead. They have given authority to a system of idolatry. And they have caused it to come to pass, that whoever would not worship images should be put to death. And they have set on all "the mark of the beast;" they require all to profess conformity to every one of their false doctrines, under pain of being forbidden to buy or sell, to deal or to be dealt with, to help or to be helped. And in order to make it yet further manifest that this is the corrupt tyranny of the Latin church, we have the number of the beast set down, "Six hundred threescore and six." And this number, in the Greek language, is properly expressed by the letters which form the word *Latynos*, Latin.

Nor need we marvel that the ecclesiastical tyranny of Rome is pointed out to our abhorrence, by so many characters so minutely described. The whole history of mankind presents no instance worthy of comparison, for the abominations which have been practised, nay boastfully professed, under the colour of the Gospel. No parallel can be found for the arrogance, the covetousness, the cruelty, the impurity, the wilful suppression of truth, the obstinate resistance to enquiry and reform, and above all, the outrageous blasphemy, which are recorded of these pretended successors of St. Peter, and self styled viceregents of Christ. How refreshing it is in the midst of such abundance of iniquity, to hear that there were some who would not receive the mark of the beast! How glad we are to know that there were many witnesses to the truth, during the long dominion of falsehood; many who rather than keep sinful silence, not only submitted cheerfully to be shut out from all the comforts of life, but also spared not to encounter the most excruciating death. Let us hope that many more than we can possibly know of, have had the heart thus to love their Lord. Let us trust that of the numbers who still cleave to this false system, there are many whose faith and hope and charity survive its withering influence. Let us be thankful that we have ourselves been exempted from its power. Let us watch that we never secretly partake of its spirit, nor uncharitably revile its misguided friends.

Blessed be thy name, O Lord, that our church has shaken off the usurpations of the Pope, and held fast the faith once delivered to the saints! Oh grant that we may walk worthy of the truth which we profess, and of the liberty which through thy mercy we enjoy!

The vision of a Lamb standing on the mount Sion.

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These † were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto

them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, ² Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

† Gr. were bought.

¹ Ps. 146. 5. Acts 14. 15.

² Is. 21. 9. Jer. 51. 8. ch. 18. 2.

§ 711. *God's judgments against the worshippers of the beast.*

We regard the three preceding chapters as containing three distinct views of the Christian church, its testimony, its sufferings, and its corruption, brought down towards the period when its warfare is accomplished. The present chapter represents it as seen after the opening of the sixth seal, and shews to us the same twelve times twelve thousand saints, standing with the Lamb on the mount Sion, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads." How decided is their Christian character, that it may be thus known and read of all men! How joyful is that voice from heaven, how sweet those harps, how full of melody that song which no man but these-scaled saints could learn to sing! These are guiltless of that spiritual adultery; which consists in forsaking Christ for mammon, in worshipping the beast instead of God. These are such as obey in all things the commandment of their Saviour, "Follow me." John 1. 43. A kind of firstfruits they are of God's creatures, see James 1. 18; "firstfruits unto God, and to the Lamb." Like Nathanael, they are Israelites indeed, in whom is found no guile. See John 1. 47. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, they walk in all the commandments of God blameless. See Luke 1. 5, 6. How cheering it is to know that such as these there are, and have been, and will be unto the end! How encouraging in our conflict with the dragon, to be assured that there are so many who so entirely overcome!

But besides the scaled thousands of the children of Israel, themselves perhaps also symbols of the Gentile Christians, we read in the same passage of a palm bearing multitude, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Ch. 7. 9. And accordingly we here see an angel "fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." And the purport of his preaching is this, that they must fear God, and give Him glory, because of his approaching judgment; "and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Which four objects are the very same which are severally smitten, at the sounding of the four first trumpets; to which period, following next after the sealing of the saints, these verses most probably correspond. Another angel then proclaims the fall of Babylon, which is another name for Rome; the Babylonish empire being the head of the image in Daniel, of which the Roman formed the feet and toes. See Dan. 2. 41. And thereupon a third angel gives fearful warning of the sentence awaiting those, who shall thenceforth worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark; a sentence so terrible, that we tremble to think it possible that our brethren should in any case be exposed to it.

How deeply then does it concern every one of us, to know the kingdom of the beast from the kingdom of Christ! How much need have we to bear constantly in mind that the everlasting Gospel enjoins us to fear God, or that we must else tremble at his judgments! With what jealousy must we watch for his honour, that we give to no one else the worship due to Him! With what agony must we apprehend his displeasure, for ourselves if we are not sure that we are faithful, and for our brethren if we have reason to fear that they receive the mark of the beast! Oh that God may in his mercy make effectual to the amendment of many these fearful words of warning! Oh that the Lamb of God; which taketh away the sins of the world, may win many by the revelation of his love!

The vision of the harvest, and the winepress.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ^{||}from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, [†]Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

^{||} Or, *from henceforth saith the Spirit, Yea.*

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

[†] Joel 3. 13.

[†] Or, *dried.*

§ 712. *The joy of the faithful, the misery of the wicked.*

The fruit of "the patience of the saints," of them "that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," was manifested in their glorious appearance on mount Sion with the Lamb, as contrasted with the agony of the worshippers of the beast. It is here further declared by a voice from heaven, the very same probably of which mention has before been made, that "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," from the time when this was written. At the moment of their departure their gain is great. They "rest from their labours." This alone is no small advantage, considering how many and how oppressive are the cares, the trials, the fears, the doubts, and difficulties of this present life. And further, "their works do follow them." Justified as they are by the blood of Jesus, solely through faith in Him, they must notwithstanding be judged by their works. And it is their gain and glory that their works have been according to God's will. God grant that we may die in the Lord; testifying to the truth as it is in Jesus, whether we are suffering for it, or not! God grant that the works, which then must follow us, may be such as shall not make us to be ashamed, when we stand before our Redeemer's throne!

That this judgment is nigh at hand, we are all aware. That it is brought nearer by each instance of holiness in the saints, and by every case of iniquity in the wicked, may be inferred from the two visions of the harvest and the winepress. For in both cases we see that the growth having once begun, nothing can hinder the ripening from taking place. Whether it be the wheat which is to be gathered up for Christ's garner, or the grapes which are to be trodden out in the winepress of his wrath, the sickle is sure to be thrust in at last. The harvest of the earth is the gathering in of the wheat. And as "the tares are the children of the wicked one," see Matt. 13. 38, so the wheat must be the children of God. And accordingly He that gathers in the harvest is like unto the Son of man, seated on a white cloud, having on his head a golden crown. For He it is who has purchased and redeemed us. And who so fit as He to gather us safe in the last day under his care? May the valleys in that day stand so thick with corn, as to laugh and sing for joy! See Ps. 65. 14. May the harvest of the earth be abundant, to the glory of the heavenly Husbandman!

But at that time there must be fulfilled this other vision of the winepress. And both visions relate to one and the same period, one which seems to correspond to the three last trumpets sounding. And as the first is the gathering in the fulness of the saints, of whom the firstfruits have before been described; ver. 4; so the other is the cutting down the multitude of the wicked, who after the sore judgments already threatened, yet repent not of their evil works. See ch. 9. 21. One of the angels in this vision "came out from the altar" of "the temple which is in heaven." And his cry may be considered as pronouncing the sentence, which was put off for a time at the opening of the fifth seal. See ch. 6. 9. He "had power over fire;" it being the end of such as are here spoken of to be burned. But chiefly is their sentence of wrath described, by the casting clusters of the vine into a winepress. In countries which yield grapes and wine, this image would most forcibly express the sharp vengeance which is to overtake the wicked, and the irresistible force by which they will then be destroyed. While the blood which flows over so great a space, and to so great a depth, shews how large are the numbers to be slain; by the horsemen who will then be let loose. Thus the wicked miserably perish, whilst the righteous enjoy rest and glory everlasting.

God grant that when Christ treads the winepress of his wrath, we may be safe in the garner of his love! God grant that the sharp sickle may reap us unto glory, instead of cutting us off unto perdition!

The seven angels with vials. The song of the redeemed.

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3 And they sing¹ the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; ²just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

4³ Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall

come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

¹ Exod. 15. 1.² Psalm 145. 17.³ Jer. 10. 7.§ 713. *Assurance of mercy our support under the revelations of judgment.*

At the opening of the seventh seal seven trumpets are sounded by seven angels; each foreboding some signal judgment from God upon the children of men. Ch. 8. The visions seen by St. John, after eating the little book, have brought us down to the same period in the events of time. And accordingly seven angels are now to pour out "seven golden vials," open cups, or bowls, "full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever." And in these vials we shall find an exact correspondence with the trumpets, one by one, in order; such as proves that under the different symbols the very same judgments are foreshewn, only with fresh particulars pointed out to our attention, for the more full description of the events. Herein then we may be prepared to meet with the most terrible revelation of the most severe sufferings, which can be inflicted on the body and soul of man. Herein we shall see accomplished the words spoken by Moses, so long ago to the church in the wilderness, "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury, and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins." Lev. 26. 27, 28.

But how graciously throughout all this revelation does God temper the threatenings of his wrath with the assurances of his mercy! How seasonably for our comfort, and support, is there first shewn to St. John, once more, ere the vials are poured out, the vision of the saints rejoicing in the glory of the Lord! Let us by faith behold them standing on that bright pavement, of which "glass mingled with fire" gives some faint conception. Let us listen to the melody of their harps, "the harps of God." Let us try whilst yet on earth to join heartily in the song they sing, and to feel, as we give utterance to their words, how great and marvellous are God's works, how just and true the ways of Christ, how greatly the Lord ought to be had in reverence, and his name how in all things to be glorified, how only He is holy, how surely all nations shall at length be forced by his manifest judgments, though they will not by his covenanted mercies, to come and worship before Him.

These thoughts of the church triumphant, its songs of reverence and praise, are most fitting to sustain our spirits, when under the sense of our own aggravated sins, we tremble at the revelation of the righteous judgments of God. When the angels are coming out of the temple, in clothing of the Jewish priests, as the ministers of God; when the vials full of wrath are put into their hands; when the temple is so "filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power," that no man was able to enter into it, signifying that during the pouring out of the vials few if any should be brought to repentance; let us still keep our eyes fixed upon "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name;" and let us feel assured that up to this hour opportunity is given unto us by God, to be reckoned as belonging to their company. Behold now is the day of salvation! Behold now the temple is open, and we have access unto God through Christ! Now let us begin to serve Him faithfully; and behold we need never cease to be his saints! Now let us begin to sing his praise devoutly. And behold we need not be silenced any more to all eternity! The vials of God's wrath no longer fill our hearts with terror, when we feel persuaded that we are ourselves the vessels of his mercy. Instead of dismay at the thought of nature overruled, we acknowledge that God's working is great and marvellous, in destroying as well as in creating. And instead of the agony of alarm in behalf of them that suffer, or the disposition to repine at their sufferings, we are able in all to give God the glory; we desire in all to say devoutly to our Lord, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

The five first vials poured out on the kingdom of the beast.

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and pro-

phets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9 And men were ||scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

|| Or, burned.

§ 714. *The impenitence of the sufferers. The rejoicing of the saints.*

The correspondence between the vials and the trumpets, and the identity of the plagues signified severally by each, will appear from considering that under either symbol the first fell upon the earth, the second on the sea, the third on the fountains and rivers of waters, the fourth upon the sun, and the fifth consisted in tormenting pain. And in like manner we shall see presently that the sixth vial and the sixth trumpet both make mention of the river Euphrates, and that the seventh of each refers to the end of all things. See ch. 8. 9. and 11. Here then let us again reflect, how surely He who created every thing, designs to use the great and glorious objects all around, for instruments of wrath, against those who will not now turn them to his glory, and to the praise of their Saviour's name. The earth that now yields its wholesome fruits, for the nourishment of our health and strength, shall then be made productive of a noisome and grievous sore. The sea, now so fresh, so clear, so glorious to behold, shall become as the blood of one dead, to the destruction of all that live therein. The rivers and fountains of waters, those springs of universal use for food and cleanliness, these also shall become blood. The sun, whose light and warmth are now so needful for our help and comfort, shall then scorch with deadly fire.* And from the darkness, or in other words from the smoke, see ch. 9. 2, 3, shall arise that which fills with pains and sores, and makes men gnaw their tongues for pain.

In all which it is to be observed, that they only are to suffer, who have "the mark of the beast," and worship his image. They who have the blood to drink are they who shed the blood of saints and prophets. These are the men whom the sun will scorch with heat. And it is in the kingdom of the beast that "they gnawed their tongues for pain;" that kingdom then probably prevailing more largely than ever in the world. And further observe these judgments bring none of them to repentance; or at least it is not mentioned after any one of the vials. Whilst it is recorded after the fourth that the men "blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." And again after the fifth it is set down, that they "blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." This is the most awful thought of all. This cuts off all that hope of advantage to the sufferers, which best helps to reconcile us to the sight of suffering. Surely they will repent, and amend! Surely it will turn to their profit, and help them forward in the right way that leads unto everlasting life! But no; where these bowls of wrath are emptied, there is not a heart that can be softened by the outpouring of affliction. The afflicted only blaspheme the more. Never may we thus kick against the pricks! See Acts 9. 5. Never may we be thus given over to a reprobate mind! See Rom. 1. 28.

And here also let us once more observe, that in these fearful judgments of God, his obedient servants not merely acquiesce and minister, but also give glory to his name. The angel of the waters is heard to express aloud his sense of the fitness of that plague, which he was made the means of inflicting. And when he considered how the worshippers of the beast had "shed the blood of saints and prophets, he proclaims how worthy they are of having blood to drink, and how righteous the Lord is who thus had judged. This is a frame of mind most difficult to attain; but one which makes us most like unto God's best of servants, nay which makes us most like unto Himself. He can at once be just and merciful. He can at once punish and yet love. And so might we approach most nigh unto his character, if on contemplating these visitations of his wrath, we were able without the least of pride in ourselves, or of unconcern towards our perishing fellow-creatures, to say, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus."

The sixth and seventh vials are poured out.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15 ¹ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

¹ Matt. 24. 43.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance ² before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

² Jer. 25. 15.

§ 715. *They that suffer, still will not repent.*

The sixth vial relates to a plague of warfare. And it evidently refers to some power to be raised up in the eastern parts of the world, which shall come from thence for the desolation of the kingdom of the beast. Now this kingdom we should remember extends throughout the whole of that which we call the civilized world. The Roman empire, and the kingdoms into which it has been divided, have continued for many ages to be foremost in arts and sciences, and in skill and power, and above all, in the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of this empire, and of these kingdoms, that Satan has so long and so successfully employed, in corrupting or oppressing the true church of Christ. And against all those who are parties to such oppression or corruption, especially when their lukewarm profession of the faith has been turned by the preceding plagues into daring blasphemy, it is against these that the kings from the east will come up, to chastise them with all the horrors of war.

In that day their own kings shall be deluded by some specious but false encouragement. And not their kings only, but those "of the whole world;" as if the powers of all nations, in all the quarters of the globe, should be then leagued against the Lord and against his anointed. It was by a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets, that Ahab was led on to his destruction. See 1 Kings 22. 23. It will be by pretended miracles, set up in opposition to such as then really will be wrought by God, pretended by "the dragon," and "the beast," and "the false prophet," that other beast which made an image to the first, see ch. 11. 13—15, it will be by these means that the enemies of God will be gathered together for their final defeat, at the place here signified by the name of Armageddon. How much need then have God's faithful servants to watch always, trying the spirits whether they be of God; lest if they sleep sinfully, their garments be taken from them, which used to be the punishment of sentinels found sleeping at their post, and the shame of their nakedness be exposed! See ch. 3. 18.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet is followed by "great voices in heaven," these voices celebrating the glorious reign of Christ, the judgment of the wicked, and the reward of the saints. "And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and great hail." Ch. 11. 15. 19. Here we are further told how "the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air," which is supposed to allude to what is elsewhere said of Satan, that he is "the prince of the power of the air." Eph. 2. 2. And also there was such an earthquake, so mighty, and so great, "as was not since men were upon the earth." The great city, the great Babylon, the symbol of great Rome, "was divided into three parts." And the other "cities of the nations fell." And if the great city did not at once fall utterly, this was only because it was devoted by God to more signal punishment, "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." The islands and the mountains disappeared. A great hail, so great as to be manifestly a miracle, fell upon men out of heaven. And, oh most horrible of all, "men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." And this at the end of all the seven plagues! Well might that great voice say, "It is done!" Henceforth men shall be no more thus chastened. For even they which heard that voice would not repent. And have not we been told "the time is short?" 1 Cor. 7. 29. Have we not heard of our Lord, saying, "It is finished?" John 19. 30. What can move us to repentance, if we are deaf to Christ speaking from the cross? What can awaken us to a sense of eternity, if we still trifle away each moment as it comes, when we know not what an hour will bring forth? See Prov. 27. 1.

The woman sitting on the scarlet coloured beast.

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5 And upon her forehead was a name written,

|| Gr. *gilded*.

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

† Or, *fornications*.

§ 716. *The infatuation of the Romish church.*

This conference with the angel, and the vision of "the judgment of the great whore," which extends through the two following chapters, are designed to explain and to enlarge the things set forth in some of the preceding visions. It is in the wilderness that St. John sees this wicked woman; as if to signify that she professes to be a church, and would fain be taken for the true church, which was before seen as a woman in the wilderness. See ch. 12. "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" Isa. 1. 21. How does the church that was once so pure at Rome corrupt all the nations of Christendom, and make drunk with the wine of her fornication the inhabitants of the earth! For that this woman is the church of Rome in its state of most gross corruption, is evident from what is here said of the seven-headed beast that carries her, from the character ascribed to her, and from its being added afterwards, "the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth," and, "the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Ver. 9. 18.

The scarlet coloured beast is the same which was seen before, "having seven heads and ten horns," ch. 13. 1, now "full of names of blasphemy," and deep dyed in the colour of the "great red dragon." Ch. 12. 3. It is the whole power and authority of civil government, throughout the regions which used to form the Roman empire, exercised in subservience to an usurping church, instead of labouring to promote the real kingdom of Christ. The woman is the church in its apostacy; far gone from its first love, decked out with the pomps and vanities of the world, holding forth false doctrines and indulgence for evil deeds, as a cup of intoxication for her paramours. On her forehead is written a mystical name, "Babylon the great," signifying Rome; "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth," signifying the parentage of all manner of iniquity. And she who intoxicates others is also drunken herself. She is drunken with "the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." So abundantly have they been slain by her orders! So gross is the infatuation into which she has fallen, by resorting to bloodshed for the suppression of the truth!

This was a sight at which St. John "wondered with great admiration" or astonishment. And the angel proceeds to offer some further explanations. But ere we study his account, let us pause to observe how much there really is to wonder at, how much to fill us with awe, and horror, and indignation, for the affronted majesty of our Lord, in the pretensions and practices of the apostate church of Rome. A bishop claims the right to dispose of kingdoms; and seats himself on the altar of God. A whole order of bishops, priests, and deacons, declare that they can turn bread into the very substance of God, and constrain men to bow the knee to this their creature. They uphold image worship. They profess to forgive sins. They preach at once the merit of good works, and indulgences for sin. They use an unknown tongue for public prayer, forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats. And they rivet these and other like chains of darkness, on the consciences of mankind, by withholding the word of God from the people. Add to this, they support their usurpation by the imprisonment, torture, and death, of all that dare to question their supposed infallibility. Instead of persuading, they compel. Instead of appealing to reason and affection, the method sanctioned by the Spirit of God, they apply the dungeon, the rack, or the fire. And shall not we also wonder with St. John, that such a monster has been permitted to have power in the earth, under the semblance of the church of Christ?

The angel explains the symbols.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the

Lamb shall overcome them: ' for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

¹ 1 Tim. 6. 15. ch. 19. 16.

§ 717. *That secret unbelief is nigh to open infidelity.*

This explanation of the preceding symbols, still leaves much to exercise "the mind that hath wisdom;" and we may still say of what is written in this book, "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Dan. 12. 10. The wicked shall not understand, though they have worldly wisdom. And the good, in order to understand, must be also wise; they must be diligent in studying the Revelation, and the history by which it is fulfilled. May we have help from God to understand aright the meaning of his prophecies, and to practise the great lessons they contain! Convinced of his wisdom, justice, mercy, and truth, seeing in the events of history the proofs of his providence, and being assured by what He has done already that He will fulfil all his promise, may we rejoice in tribulation, wait with patience, hope with confidence, and work with love!

The seven heads of the beast are "seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." And the woman "is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." These heads then are the seven hills on which the city of Rome is founded. And as mountains imply height and strength, and seven is a symbol of completeness, they may probably mean further, the universal empire to which Rome attained. "And there are seven kings," of which also it is to be understood that the seven heads are a sign. Now kings seem to stand in Daniel for governments. See Dan. 7. 17. 24. And these seven may therefore be seven forms of government, successively prevailing in Rome; five of which had fallen in the time of St. John, one was flourishing, namely, the imperial, and one was yet to come. This one to come, the seventh, was to "continue a short space." And afterwards would arise the beast which "was, and is not," ver. 8, being the eighth head or government, springing from the seven, and going into perdition. The imperial worldly government, though seemingly destroyed by the wounding of its head, see ch. 13. 3, yet lasted for many centuries. It was superseded by an usurpation of short continuance. And hereafter will arise a new empire having all the hateful characters of the beast; when at length the reign of Satan in the kingdoms of the earth will be overthrown, and they will become the kingdoms of Christ. The ten horns, ten kings to arise after the time of St. John, receiving power for "one hour," or the same time with the beast, and having "one" or the same mind with one another, are the kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided; which in times past have all united, and will again, to make war with the Lamb by persecuting his saints. The waters are the multitude of people, subject to the influence of the corrupt Romish church. And the time shall come when the ten kingdoms, instead of abetting the lewd woman in her iniquities, shall unite in bringing to pass God's will, by stripping her of her treasures, and depriving her of her followers. This they will do by giving their kingdoms to the beast. So that it will be the wrath of man, the cruel policy of worldly statesmen, overruled by God's power to fulfil his will.

These latter events have not yet come to pass. But when we consider to what a degree the Romish system has debased the Gospel, and to what an extent the corrupting influence of the state, in the patronage of the church, has produced throughout all Christendom the habit of profession without practice, of pretending to believe without believing, we can see how short a step there would be for very many of mankind, from secret unbelief to professed infidelity. And we can hence easily imagine a revolution in society, which will turn the hollow friends of the Lamb into his avowed enemies, and the deceitful patrons of the church into its bitter persecutors. If such open infidelity should ever prevail in the kingdoms of the earth, it would soon thrust home its persecuting horns into the defenceless superstition of Rome, from which it derived its own growth and strength. The beast will cast off the woman from her seat and trample her under foot. But in vain will he try his strength against the Lamb. "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." He, and they that are with Him, they that are "called, and chosen, and faithful," shall conquer, and triumph, and reign for ever.

The fall of Babylon proclaimed.

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not

partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

¹ Ch. 14. 8.

|| Or, power.

² Isa. 47. 8.

§ 718. *God's people invited to come out from the corruption of Rome.*

This chapter, as well as the one before and that which follows, contains a review and exposition of things previously foreshewn, especially of what is to happen during the pouring out of the seven vials or plagues yet to be fulfilled. Here in particular we have an awful warning of the fall of Babylon. "Another angel" comes down from heaven, "having great power;" and having also so great glory or brightness, that the earth is lighted up by it. He cries "mightily with a strong voice," "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." His account of its becoming the habitation of devils, foul spirits, unclean and hateful birds, refers to the common notions of a large city in ruins, such as the real Babylon long has been, and such as Rome, which it here signifies, is to be hereafter. And the reason is because she has been the means of corrupting the nations of the earth, seducing them from the true faith of Christ, to embrace her impure and debased form of Christianity; and also that she has revelled in the profits of this her godless trade, so as to enrich the merchants of the earth "through the abundance of her delicacies." How different is this view of the decline and fall of an empire, a city, or a church, from that which prevails among some who call themselves philosophers! How well may we apply here the rule which has been laid down by Solomon, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people!" Prov. 14. 34.

But before that great fall takes place, Christ's people are exhorted to escape. From the beginning of her abominable practices, up to the hour when "her sins have reached unto heaven," these words are addressed to every one that has ears to hear, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." It is a relief to hear that even in that devoted city there are some of God's people to come out. And instead of reviling them that still stay in, it would be well to examine frequently our own faith and practice; lest they partake of that corruption, which having flowed for ages from this one centre, throughout the greater part of the Christian community, is not to be shut out from our hearts, without great difficulty, and constant watchfulness. This it is which gives to Rome and her abominations so prominent a place in this book, almost to the exclusion of that other great apostasy which has taken place in the eastern church. Her influence has been far more extensive for evil, as it might have been for good. Her sorceries have bewitched the nations of most weight in the old world, and had once almost engrossed the whole continent of that which to us was new. And above all, by the wine of her fornications she still tries, and in part prevails, to poison those most healthy and fruitful churches of God, which by a salutary self reform, and by adherence to Christ's word and ordained ministry, have come most nigh unto the primitive pattern.

In the judgments to be inflicted on this false church at the end, the true people of God are here exhorted to take part. This will be no more than becomes their character, when they share with Christ his kingdom, ruling the nations with a rod of iron. See ch. 2. 27. Then will they reward unto his enemies double for all their evil deeds; and join to give them torment and sorrow, in proportion to their pride, and luxury, and presumption. Then will this pretended queen find herself indeed a widow, bereft of all help of man, and overtaken by Him to whom "vengeance belongeth." Heb. 10. 30. If it be true that we are to take part in the execution of that sentence, let us beware lest in our hearts we now question its justice. It is no charity to speak peace to the wicked. It is no goodness to give countenance to sin. It is not liberality to man, but rebellion against God, to doubt that all his dealings, whether of mercy or of wrath, are wise, and righteous, and good.

O God, who didst hearken to the prayer of Abraham, and promised to spare the city "for ten's sake," Gen. 18. 32, now hear us whilst we plead for the pardon of our brethren; and also grant, that when the hour of thy judgment shall arrive, we may neither murmur nor repine, but like Abraham, may return unto our place!

The lamentation over Babylon.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all || thyne wood; and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner yessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and † slaves, and souls of men.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are

|| Or, sweet.

departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her castliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

† Or, bodies.

§ 719. *The end of serving Mammon.*

In this lamentation over Babylon and her fall we have a faithful picture of the covetousness and luxury which prevails throughout spiritual Babylon, and of the end which awaits these many worshippers of mammon. What is the treasure recommended to us in Scripture? That which is in heaven. See Matt. 6. 20. What is the use of this world's wealth there taught? To make to ourselves friends who will receive us into everlasting habitations. See Luke 16. 9. And what might we have looked for as the fruit of these precepts, after the operation of eighteen centuries? Surely no less than a distaste for luxury, a conviction that it is more blessed to give than to receive, an anxiety to find poor to whom to give, and such a prevalence of industry, and sobriety, such watchfulness against waste, such abhorrence of excess, that there would have been scarcely any poor to be relieved.

But what now is the real character of Christendom? An almost universal love of money; a desire to possess it for its own sake, or for the sake of the good things which it will purchase, thinly veiled under the pretence of a desire to do good with it; an ostentatious display of finery in dress, and furniture, and equipage; a profuse and selfish expenditure in the preparation of our meals, and a fastidious refinement of society in the manner of eating them. The enjoyment of these good things to any great extent is engrossed by a few, but coveted no less eagerly by the many. And the same vanity and gross sensuality, the same dishonesty, Sabbath breaking, and slavish drudgery to mammon, are manifest in all ranks of society. Few labour with their hands that they may have to give to them that need, see Eph. 4. 28; and fewer still can be found to go out unto all nations, in order to teach and preach the Gospel. See Matt. 28. 19. But there is no limit to the toil undertaken, or to the ingenuity and enterprise displayed, in trading for the increase of riches, or in ministering to the luxury of the rich. Even slaves are bought and sold, nay and bred, and kidnapped, where it may be done safely and gainfully. Even souls are sacrificed, without compunction, where profit can be made by sin promoted.

And this is the state of things in Christian countries. Yea, it is carried to the utmost height in that very city which pretends to be mother church of all, in the palace of that very Pope who calls himself the Vicar of Christ. And it is chiefly by means of popish influence long ascendant, that this state of things so universally prevails. No wonder that Babylon must fall! No wonder that the suldeness of her desolation, and the smoke of her burning, should raise throughout the nations which have shared her pleasures, an universal cry of woe! Oh ye that live deliciously with her, come out of her, whilst yet ye may; for behold, in one hour her judgment comes! Ye merchants, which are made rich by her, renounce your unhalloved gains; for behold, "in one hour so great riches is come to nought!" Ye shipmasters and mariners, who go forth upon her errands, carrying out to distant lands, not the tidings of salvation, but her many novel arts of sensuality, her many new implements of war; behold the end of all your voyages, "in one hour is she made desolate!" And alas, alas, thou great city, thou mighty city, see the vanity of the friendship of the world! See thy friends how far off they stand, more afraid of thy torment, than concerned for thy fall; lamenting, not for thy distress and desolation, but because they can no longer share thy pleasures, no longer be made rich by thy trade! Such is the hollowness of worldly friendship. Such is the vanity of worldly wealth. Such is the end which awaits the servants and worshippers of mammon. God forbid that we should thus cease from serving Him! God grant we may serve Him, and Him only, in all things, at all costs, henceforth for ever!

The rejoicing over Babylon.

20 Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he* be,

shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

§ 720. *That we must give account of our stewardship.*

The servants of God and those of mammon are in nothing more opposed than in their sorrows and their joys. For instance, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15. 10. But this is a matter of grief to the worldly minded. They have lost one of their company, one of their party, one who helped to keep them in countenance in their sins. And Satan, whom they serve, has lost one of his subjects, one whom he designed to make his own for ever. In like manner, whilst the worldly minded selfishly lament over the fall of "that great city Babylon," there goes forth this summons to the servants of the Lord, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." Let us try to feel the joy that angels feel, and for the things which make angels joyful. Let us study what has been written by prophets and apostles, that we may learn from them to mourn for sin, and to rejoice in the glory of the Lord. Let us shed tears of heartfelt sorrow over the abundance of the iniquity which surrounds us, as well as over our own manifold offences. Let us have our mourning turned into joy, by the assurances of God's redeeming love, and of Christ's final triumph over all his enemies.

The proclamation to rejoice is addressed to heaven as well as earth. And accordingly a mighty angel takes up "a stone like a great millstone," and casts it "into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." This is an action significant of the angel's triumph, and of the violent destruction of Babylon. And both these things are further set forth in the angel's words which follow, describing all that used to go on constantly in the city, and declaring that shall henceforth no more take place. The sounds of music shall no more be heard. No workman any more shall work, nor millstone grind, nor candle shine; nor bride or bridegroom any more rejoice. So great shall be the ruin, so entire the desolation of that city, whose merchants have been hitherto the great men of the earth; and that, because by her sorceries all nations were deceived.

Let us examine then, have any of these sorceries still influence with us? Let us examine, do we suffer our affection to be engrossed by any of these transitory pleasures or employments? Here we see how soon they come to nought. Here we may learn, not indeed to neglect our business on earth, or to refuse the enjoyments which God here gives us, but thankfully to use them as his gifts, watchfully to remember that we are but stewards for a time, and diligently to prepare for the hour when it shall be said to us, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." Luke 16. 2. Let us think of this, when next we hear the voice of harpers, musicians, pipers, trumpeters, when next we see a bridegroom and a bride: these sounds however sweet must cease, these joys however excellent must come to nought, and we also who partake of them must depart. God be praised for the pleasures which He gives us here! God grant that we may so use them, or refuse them, in due season, as to partake of pleasures for evermore. Or if it be by skilful workmanship that our taste is gratified, and our comforts are enlarged, if the mill fail not, when we want it, to prepare our food, nor the candle to give us light in the night season; for these things let us also give thanks to God, these things let us use to God's glory, these things let us be ready to resign when He requires, and when we are laid where no such skill can any more avail us, in a place of darkness and in the grave.

At the fall of Babylon there will be found in her not only "the blood of prophets, and of saints," but also "of all that were slain upon the earth." She has to answer not only for the putting to death God's servants purposely, but for the wanton destruction of human life, in the many wars which her false system allows and promotes. Let us be aware that when our time shall come, we also must give account for many things more than we have done ourselves, even for that which we have promoted or allowed wilfully in others. Let us watch therefore that we partake not in other men's sins, and especially in this sin of bloodshed. Let us labour for peace. Let us abominate war. Let us shrink from all the work of warfare. For let us remember how surely the day is coming when "the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Isa. 26. 21.

Alleluia at the judgment of Babylon, and the marriage of the Lamb.

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the

voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, ¹ Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, ² See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

¹ Matt. 22. 2.

² ch. 22. 9.

§ 721. *That we must be made ready for closer union with Christ.*

When we are told of Alleluia sung in heaven, over the judgment of the apostate church of Rome, it is important to bear in mind how large has been the extent of evil, promoted by that lewd woman in the world: how gross the dishonour done to God, and to his Gospel, how great the wrong to Christ, and to his saints. Reviewing then the history of the whole church, by which we always mean both ministers and people, let us consider through what a long extent of time, and over what a large proportion of professing Christians, the Romish church, in its harlot state, has exercised either open sway or secret influence. Let us observe what a foul blot it has spread over nearly the whole page of the Gospel; how it has corrupted nearly all the doctrines and ordinances of Christ, and made them at once hurtful to believers, and vile in the sight of infidels. Let us mark how it has sanctioned covetousness, and pride, and profligacy, by the force of example in its high places. Nor let us forget to what a degree it still holds us back from primitive Christianity, by that fearful reaction in men's minds; which, because the ministry was unduly exalted, and the Word arbitrarily suppressed, because uniformity was supported by persecution, and submission enforced by strength, now leads them to make light of the ministerial authority, and to trifle with the Holy Scriptures, to glory in divisions, and to make a merit of insubordination. And shall we not, on grounds like these, rejoice to see her smoke rise up for ever? When the elders, and the four living creatures, and the "much people in heaven," are all worshipping God on this great occasion, when they call on all his servants both small and great to praise the Lord; shall not we say, "Amen; Alleluia?" And shall we not also be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to God, because "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready?"

This is an event which is to take place at about the same period with the fall of the mother of harlots. And this marriage is a figurative description of the intimate union of purpose and affection, which will then be perfected between the saints and Christ. So enraptured was St. John at these joyful tidings, that he fell down to pay worship to the messenger. But the angel forbids him; reminding him that he was but his fellow servant, a servant of God, together with the apostle and with his brethren the prophets. For they had the testimony of Jesus, and it was their office to make it known unto the world; as it was the office of the ministering angel to help in making it known to St. John. Whilst we watch that we give no worship except to God, let us endeavour to be thankful both for the words of his prophets, and for the ministry of his angels. And let us lay to heart what is here written by their means, for our instruction, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." "These," let us observe, "are the true sayings of God." In this blessedness we may rely that it is sure, we may trust that it is unchangeable. Though we know not exactly what here it means, we may not doubt that it is a joy more excellent than any words on earth can signify, a happiness which is but faintly expressed by the most happy of all occasions here, a marriage. The wife is said to make "herself ready." But on the other hand it is "granted" to her, or given, "that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." Thus it is given unto the saints to be made righteous; and at the same time it is expected that they work out their own salvation. May it be our study to make ourselves ready for the marriage of the Lamb! May God graciously impart to us a wedding garment! May He clothe us "with the garments of salvation;" and cover us "with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels!" Isa. 61. 10.

The great slaughter inflicted by the word of God.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself.

13 ¹ And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, ¹ KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that

fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, both free and bond, both small and great.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

¹ Is. 63. 2.

² ch. 17. 14.

§ 722. *The infatuation of unbelievers.*

The great slaughter of the wicked, which has been already foreshewn under the sixth trumpet and sixth vial, is here further set forth at length. The rider on the white horse is "called Faithful and True," names often given to our blessed Lord; who seems now about to fulfil the prophetic words of David, "Gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty: according to thy worship and renown." Ps. 45. 4. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," according to this his own saying in Isaiah, "their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." Is. 63. 3. And lest we should still have any doubt of who He is, we are told that besides his name, "that no man knew," He is also called "The Word of God." Nay further there is one other name of his here set down, "King of kings, and Lord of lords!" It is therefore the Son of God Himself who thus goes forth to battle, followed by his saints, also on white horses, in token of their certain victory. But lest we should forget that all these are symbols, lest we should think that Jesus and the heavenly armies are really about to fight with men on earth, it is to be noted that their only armour is fine linen clean and white, that is to say, "the righteousness of saints;" ver. 8; and that it is out of the mouth of Christ that the sharp sword goeth, with which He is to smite the nations. Whence it seems to be probable that his victory will consist in the prevalence of the Gospel over error and imposture; and that the slaughter of them that oppose will be brought to pass by means of men wicked like themselves. For thus it is that in time past, God has been used to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Thus it is that He has hitherto overruled the evil passions of sinful men to work out his own righteous purposes. Still they are God's purposes. Still it is with a rod of iron that Christ will rule. Symbols are signs of realities, and these realities more great and glorious than the signs. Though "the winepress" be a figure, there is such a thing as "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." And it is here plainly signified, that Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, will also consume sinners in his displeasure.

But by whatever means this particular judgment may be executed, there can be little doubt that a very great slaughter is here foretold. No language can more forcibly describe the entire rout, and confusion, and destruction of the armies, which will then be gathered together against the Lord. The whole power of all the kingdoms that have been grafted on the Roman empire, all the arts of the corrupt church with which they are so closely leagued, "the beast," and "the false prophet," unite all their forces; under a delusive expectation of establishing their reign. But behold their host is vanquished, and they themselves are taken. The fowls of the air are glutted with the carcasses of their followers. And they themselves are "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Does it seem scarcely possible that men should be so infatuated as to think of thus fighting against God, in the midst of the manifestation of his judgments? Let us turn to the case of the Jews worshipping a molten calf, whilst yet encamped at the foot of mount Sinai. See Ex. 32. 1—4. Let us look to ourselves, and consider whether our own oft-repeated sins are not committed against light and knowledge. And let us learn that it is not lack of evidence from God, but lack of faith in man, which is sufficient to account for sin. Let us understand how true it is, that if we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither should we be persuaded though one were to rise from the dead. See Luke 16. 31.

Satan is bound, and saints reign with Christ a thousand years.

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years;

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls

of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

§ 723. *The millennium; what it is, and what we may learn from it.*

After the seventh trumpet has sounded, after the seventh vial has been poured out, after the other different views of detached parts of this whole history have all been brought down to the last period, we are here told very remarkable things which are to happen during a thousand years, commonly known by the name of the *millennium*. That this implies a supremacy of the Gospel and its principles, in the administration of affairs on earth, is far from impossible; That it also signifies real spiritual prosperity in the church is highly probable. That from these two circumstances there would follow such an abundance of happiness to man, and glory to God, as this world never yet has yielded, seems certain.

Let this then be our view of the millennium. For "a thousand years," perhaps the seventh thousand after six thousand past away since the fall, Satan is bound by a great chain in the bottomless pit. For "a thousand years" he is shut up, and sealed; so that he can no more deceive the nations, no more set the kingdoms of the earth in array against the cause of Christ, no more, in the world which is within, set the flesh in successful opposition to the spirit. For "a thousand years" the spirit of the martyrs who have hitherto borne faithful testimony to Christ, under the oppression of the unbelieving world will revive in generations yet unborn; who shall exercise the sovereignty of the earth according to the rules of Christ in the Gospel. For "a thousand years" the generation of the wicked shall not revive, or at least shall bear so small a proportion to the righteous, as to be entirely subject to their controul. For "a thousand years" they that have part in this first resurrection, are as priests of God and of Christ, in conjunction with whom they reign; and though still subject, in due course to die in the flesh, they are delivered from the power of "the second death."

No mention is here made of Christ Himself reigning in the body on this earth. His saints will enjoy his presence then, much in the same manner as they enjoy it now. Only there will be very many more of them to enjoy it. The great army of unbelievers having been slaughtered, the faithful will possess the abundance of the earth. The great enemy of souls being confined, the Gospel will have free course, and will be glorified. The Holy Spirit, no longer so perversely resisted, will be poured out upon all flesh in abundance. See Joel 2. 28. All shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest. See Jer. 31. 34. All shall serve God, not as now grudgingly and of necessity, but freely, joyfully, and thankfully. Unity will at length prevail over divisions in religion, and in the affairs of earth there will be peace instead of war, truth for falsehood, honesty for fraud; industry, sobriety, and frugality, for idleness, intemperance, and waste.

How delightful is the thought of such a time as this on earth, when the corruption of our nature will be healed by the medicine of the Physician of souls, that healing, now so little valued, then so universally received! when the sufferings to which sin has made us heirs, will be mitigated by the general diffusion of real knowledge and true charity! when all the good creatures of God will be used with thankfulness and communicated with alacrity! when the waste places of the earth will be cultivated, and filled with worshippers not of images or idols, but of our Father which is in heaven! In such a period possibly more souls will be saved, than have been lost since Adam's sin; God will be more loved, Christ more glorified, than has been seen since the foundation of the world. But, let us remember, even they that shall be thus "blessed and holy," cannot have a better covenant, surer promises, a more sufficient sacrifice, or more merciful High Priest, than we ourselves are privileged to enjoy. Let us be faithful, in the midst of infidelity. Let us be holy, whilst iniquity abounds. Let us bear witness to Jesus, though it were to cost our lives; let us refuse to worship either beast or image whilst yet they have supremacy on the earth; and whatsoever may be our interest in the first resurrection, in the second we shall be sure to rise to life everlasting.

Satan cast into the lake of fire. The last judgment.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, ¹Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that

sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another ²book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and ^{||}hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

.. ¹ Ezek. 38. 2. & 39. 1.

² Ch. 3. 5.

^{||} Or, *the grave*.

§ 724. *The interval between death and judgment.*

We have considered the first resurrection to be a symbol, like the resurrection of the witnesses, see ch. 11. 11, a symbol of a miraculous revival in true religion. The second resurrection is that which will take place, when all that have ever lived shall stand before God to be judged according to their works. And the second death, another symbolical expression, will be inflicted on those who are cast into the lake of fire. But previous to these latter events, Satan is to be "loosed out of his prison." He is once more to go at large amongst the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, called Gog and Magog, as being enemies of God's people. See Ezek. 38. 2. These may possibly be descendants of those nations from the East, who are to slay the great army of the beast and the prophet. Ch. 16. 12, 19, 20. And so great is Satan's influence for evil, that he will be able to deceive a large multitude, and to gather them together in the vain attempt to war against the kingdoms of Christ. But though Christ's people shall not "learn war any more," Is. 2. 4, their camp and beloved city shall be preserved unhurt from the arrows of the impious besiegers. Fire will come down from God out of heaven, and devour the adversaries. "And the devil that deceived them" will be cast into the same "lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Thus will end all influence of evil. Thus will they that fight against Christ be sure to come to nought. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Judges 5. 31.

And now is seen the throne of final judgment. And before the face of Him that sat on it, "the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." So glorious is his presence; so powerful his word; so sure his promise that there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness will abide for ever. See 2 Pet. 3. 13. But first, "the dead, small and great, stand before God." They must enter into that presence, from which earth and heaven shrink. "And the books were opened." They must give an account of their stewardship. "And another book was opened, which is the book of life;" full of the names of such as shall be saved. See ch. 3. 5. "And they were judged every man according to his works;" according to the works "done in his body," 2 Cor. 5. 10, according to the life he has lived on earth. And in this judgment every child of Adam must appear, the sea as well as the land giving up "the dead which were in it;" and both the bodies which had died, and the souls which were in the place of departed spirits, here called hell, being now called forth to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And thenceforth there is no more such separation of soul and body, for "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." And therein also were cast all, who after judgment held, were not found meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1. 12. And let it not be objected, that if so very much is yet to take place, before the judgment day of Christ, the righteous, who now die in the Lord, have a long time to wait for the consummation of their bliss. Let us consider how long our forefathers have already waited, the martyrs, the apostles, the prophets, the patriarchs. Let us observe how the "souls of them that were slain for the word of God," though bidden to wait for judgment some time longer, were seen "under the altar" in heaven. Ch. 6. 9. 11. Let us remember in how many passages throughout this book, the departed saints, though their glory may be yet imperfect, are represented as being with the Lord. And let us not forget how probable it is, that to them, when they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, a thousand years may be, as with the Lord, "but one day." 2 Pet. 3. 8. And thus we shall still be able to feel a lively conviction that the time is short, that the Lord is at hand, and "that the Judge standeth before the door." James 5. 9.

The new heaven and new earth.

1 And ¹I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

4 ²And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, ³Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write⁴ for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. ⁵I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. ⁶I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

¹ Isa. 65. 17. ² Pet. 3. 13.

³ Ch. 7. 17.

⁴ 2 Cor. 5. 17.

⁵ Ch. 1. 8. & 22. 13.

⁶ Isa. 55. 1.

§ 725. *The promises and terrors of the Lord.*

In all that is written concerning things yet to come on earth, we must be aware that there is less of certainty in the interpretation of the Scripture figures, than in regard to things which have already come to pass. How much more, when we read of “a new heaven and a new earth,” must we humbly confess our inability to decide, among the views which have been taken of these passages, by the wisest and the best of our fellow Christians! And yet all Scripture is written for our edification. And of this book in particular it is said, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.” See ch. 1. 3. 22. 7. And to deem that any one part of it is altogether unprofitable, seems likely to expose us to what is said of those who “take away from the words of the book of this prophecy.” Ch. 22. 19. Let us then endeavour, by the study of these affecting images, to raise our thoughts from earth to heaven, and to kindle the warmth of our desires, towards the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. See 1 Cor. 2. 9.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, see Matt. 24. 35, heaven and earth, and the sea also. Whatever be our eternal felicity, it will not consist in the same pleasures as those which are afforded by the world wherein now we live. Our state and condition may however be represented, in some faint degree, both by the figure of a holy city, “new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,” and by that of “a bride adorned for her husband.” Now of the old Jerusalem, we know that it was “built as a city that is at unity in itself.” Ps. 122. 3. This then we may be assured will be the case in heaven, we shall be all of one heart and of one mind. And of a bride we know that it is the foremost wish of her heart to please her husband. This therefore will form a part of our heavenly happiness, the pleasure of pleasing Christ. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,” this is another figure, and conveys to us the notion of an intimate communion between men and their Maker; as if God were to dwell with them and they with Him; they being still his people, and He their God. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” For in truth there will be no crying, no sorrow, no pain, no death. “For the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.” Thus we are again reminded, in the midst of these figures, that they are figures only, that our eternal life will be altogether different from that which we lead on earth, altogether more excellent, altogether new.

It is the Judge Himself, whose voice is heard assuring us, that “these words are true and faithful.” It is Jesus, who for the full confirmation of our faith, proclaims, “It is done.” For it is He who has before described Himself, as “Alpha and Omega;” ch. 1. 8; and who in other passages, see Isa. 55. 1, John 4. 10, 14, and 7. 37, has promised to give to them that are athirst, “the fountain of the water of life freely.” Yes; the pleasures at God’s right hand flow for evermore. See Ps. 16. 12. And the figure by which their abundance and continual increase is described, is a fountain, or spring, or river. Whilst his wrath is measured out in vials or bowls, which however large, at last are emptied; or is expressed by a lake which though it be sometimes dried up, is not commonly or greatly increased. So exact is the fitness of each figurative word used throughout this book! So many more than we are able to set forth are the senses and uses they contain! The fountain we have in constant request. Let it constantly remind us of the water of life, its abundance, and how freely it is given, how ample is our heavenly inheritance, wherein God will receive us as his sons. The lake we do not so often meet with. Nor have we need to dwell so often upon the terrors of the Lord, as upon the assurances of his love. But sometimes we must call to mind that these terrors are. Sometimes it will be for our benefit to be put in remembrance, how surely the transgressors, either in point of faith or in practice, will be condemned to the second death.

The holy city new Jerusalem.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

12 And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed

to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

18 And the building of the wall of it *was of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate *was of* one pearl; and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

§ 726. *The excellency of things heavenly.*

It was "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials," that shewed St. John the judgment of Babylon. It is also one of the seven who now points out to his attention "the bride, the Lamb's wife," or, in other words, "the holy Jerusalem," both figures meaning the community of the saints. See ver. 2. Under the latter of these two figures, their state of heavenly happiness is here described at considerable length. All things which in our present world give us the notion of strength, and beauty, and grandeur, are here collected, to set forth the perfection of this city. And yet many things seem to be purposely so expressed, as to shew us that no real walls and gates are meant, but "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1. God grant that we may be helped by these awakening images to set our affection on things above! God help us to see that the very best of things below are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us! See Rom. 8. 18.

On the twelve gates of the city are written the names "of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." This turns our thoughts to God's elder covenant; and it reminds us, that as the two covenants had but one object, so the two classes of Christians, the Jewish and the Gentile, are but one people. For these gates of the city stand open to all the quarters of the earth, to admit all of every nation that believe. "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." And thus St. Paul also describes the Christian church as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone;" Eph. 2. 20; that is to say, built upon the doctrine which they taught, and by the ministers whom they ordained. The length and breadth and height of the city are next mentioned, "according to the measure of a man," which was the measurement used by "the angel." And their measure is such as to prove the great extent of the church in heaven, and that there is nothing therein wanting to perfection. The materials of the wall and of the city were at once beautiful and strong and lasting; the purity and solidity of gold being united to the transparency of glass, perhaps to shew us that what is here most frail becomes in heaven altogether incorruptible. And whilst the street is made of this golden glass, each gate is of a single pearl, and each foundation is garnished with a distinct precious stone; these jewels which we here so greatly prize serving to teach us the inestimable value of that inheritance, which we are so apt to set at nought.

And in heaven, let us observe, the most opposite of qualities, as here we count them, are reconciled and combined in one. What is most bright and clear is at the same time weighty. What is most precious is also most plentiful. Here, on the contrary, what is really excellent is usually also scarce; and were it abundant, we should be apt to count it vile. So much does our estimate of value depend upon the sense of exclusive possession! Oh that we may henceforth prize most highly not that which may most distinguish ourselves, but that which may most benefit our brethren! Oh that we may seek most earnestly, not that which most ministers to our own honour, but that which most redounds to the glory of God!

The new Jerusalem further described.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23 ¹ And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

24 ² And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

25 ³ And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

¹ Isa. 60. 19.

² Isa. 60. 3.

³ Isa. 60. 11.

§ 727. *The respect due to real greatness.*

That there was no temple seen in the new Jerusalem is a circumstance which most plainly shews it to be a type of heavenly glory. For where, except in heaven, will it be fitting for the church to have no house of prayer? where, except in the midst of that manifest presence of God, which is itself the holy of holies? See Heb. 9. 24. There indeed the whole city is one house of prayer, and all they say is one continued song of praise. "For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." As it is in God that we now "live, and move, and have our being," Acts 17. 28, so it is in Him, and in his ever blessed Son, that we shall, then perfect praise for ever. And as we shall need no place to be set apart for worship when God is "all in all," 1 Cor. 15. 28, so neither shall we want the sun to shine by day, nor the moon to give light by night; "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." At present, with all the help of the light we have, it is but darkly that we see, only for a short distance, and only for short seasons, with long intervals of night and dimness. The exercise of our senses needs frequent interruption for repose. And our understanding, however wonderfully formed, however spiritually enlightened, can know only "in part." "But then, face to face." 1 Cor. 13. 12. Then, our knowledge, like our sight, will be perfect. Then, there will be no seasons either of night or of ignorance, no intervals of doubting, no suspense of faith, but only light and love for ever.

After hearing of this city that it is lighted by the glory of God and of the Lamb, it may seem but a small matter that the kings of the earth "bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." But such is God's grace and favour towards the children of men, He represents Himself as being glorified by our unworthy services, by our undeserved salvation. And whatever there is on earth that is great and excellent, whatever there is of power, might, majesty, and dominion, it has no other real value in the end, except as it may be brought in unto the city of the Lord. In that city, the gates "shall not be shut at all by day;" that is to say, they shall be for ever open; "for there shall be no night there." No security shall be needful against enemies, when the last enemy shall have been destroyed. No barrier shall be set up against strangers; for all the dwellers in that land are of one family, and it is the pleasure of the Lord that his house should be filled. See Luke 14. 23. How encouraging is the information here conveyed, that there shall be "nations of them which are saved!" that there shall be so large a multitude in that city, privileged to "walk in the light of it!" And how glad we ought to feel on being told, that "the kings of the earth" too shall be there! that many of those who now discharge these most burdensome of this world's duties, the ministers of God unto the rest for good, see Rom. 13. 4, however much they may be envied by the proud, hated by the turbulent, and slandered by the vile, if they can but give an account of their stewardship acceptable unto the King of kings, will there reign with Him for ever!

Far be from us that unchristian spirit which would lead us to "despise dominion," and to "speak evil of dignities!" Jude 8. Far be from us that narrowness of heart and mind, which, because it cannot reach to greatness, affects to despise the great! Only let us never forget, that none are really great who are not also really good; and that the greatest of all greatness upon earth is to do most for the glory of God. They who have done nothing for God's glory, much more they who do much to his dishonour, have no part in that inheritance. However high their rank, however powerful their kingdom upon earth, if they be such as defile others, workers of abomination, utterers of falsehood, they cannot enter, though the gates be open; for they are not "written in the Lamb's book of life." Whilst therefore we honour rank on earth, let us carry on our thoughts to the thrones which are in heaven, to the Sovereign from whom there is no appeal, and with whom there is no respect of persons.

Lord, may our names be found written in thy book! may we be allowed to enter in, and share thy glory! may we so use the light which Thou now givest us, so worship in the temples where Thou now art present, as to be made meet to dwell in that heavenly city, where Thou art both the temple and the light, both the Lamb and also the King!

The river and the tree of life. The witness of John.

•1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name *shall* be in their foreheads.

5 ¹ And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord

God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me, ² See *thou do it not*: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

• Ch. 21. 23.

² Ch. 19. 10.

§ 728. *That we must watch against idolatry.*

"A pure river of water" is one of the most pleasing images presented to the mind in this view of the heavenly city. The river in the new Jerusalem consists "of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And in like manner the tree which there flourishes, "on either side of the river," is "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." And yet the nations which are there, need no such healing as we are here continually in want of. For "there shall be no more curse." And therefore there will be no sickness, no disease, no death, no hunger, and no thirst; no want, and yet abundant supply; no change, and yet perpetual variety. That river always flows. That tree is always bearing fruit. That fruit is always fresh. And they that taste thereof are always satisfied. Such are the pleasures which are at God's right hand. Such is the joy of being servants of God and of the Lamb. They have his throne in the midst of them. They see Him face to face. They have his name upon their foreheads. They dwell in the light of his countenance for ever. They serve, and yet they reign. They "reign for ever and ever." They fulfil God's will, and it is his will that they share his kingdom. They do all his pleasure. And it is his pleasure to make them partakers of his joy. Oh that we may be his servants now, and be then admitted to his throne! Oh that we may now abhor the deeds of darkness, and then dwell in light for ever!

"These sayings are faithful and true." This seems to be spoken by the angel, last mentioned as communicating with St. John. And he adds that it is the Lord God of the holy prophets, the same Jehovah Elohim who "spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," Heb. 1. 1, which sent him, to shew unto his servants, through St. John, "the things which must shortly be done." This is the very same account with which this book begins. See ch. 1. 1. And in like manner the notice that our Lord comes quickly, and the blessing pronounced on those who keep the sayings of this book, are a repetition of what is written at the beginning of it. See ch. 1. 3. Let us renew our thankfulness to our Lord, for vouchsafing to give us this light of prophecy, this standing witness of God's providence, these salutary warnings, these precious promises, these rules for our conduct, these instructions for our faith. Let us repeat our endeavours to keep what here is written, to hold fast by the convictions which we have hence derived. And let us over and over again lay to heart our Lord's assurance, that He comes quickly; until we learn not to dread his appearing, but to look for, and hasten forward, as far as lies in our power, the coming of the day of God. See 2 Pet. 3. 12.

"And I John saw these things, and heard them." This is the testimony of the apostle, to complete the chain of evidence, reaching through him and the angel from God unto his church. And by way of confirming his statement, he repeats a circumstance which happened at the close of the vision, and which had happened once before in the midst of it. It was an error of his own; and yet he twice records it. Twice he tells us how near he was to worshipping the angel; that he may twice certify us how deeply he was affected by the vision, and twice impress on us this lesson, "worship God," and Him only. Far then be from us all approaches to idolatry! Far be from us all such homage paid to saints or angels, as would be robbing God of the honour due only to Himself. By whatsoever means, and by whatsoever of his ministers, He vouchsafes to make known his will, to Him be all the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Promises and threatenings repeated.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto

you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, 'If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

¹ Rom. 2. 6.

² Isa. 41. 4. & 44. 6.

³ Isa. 55. 1.

⁴ Deut. 4. 2. Prov. 30. 6.

§ 729. *Prayer for the enjoyment of our Lord's promises.*

At the close of the prophecies of Daniel, the prophet is directed to seal the book, until "the time of the end," when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Dan. 12. 4. 9. But St. John, whose prophecies are in close connexion with those of Daniel, is bidden not to seal his prophecies, because "the time is at hand." That which before was hidden is now revealed. Oh that whilst the knowledge of evil grows apace, the knowledge of the truth may be increased! Far be it from the ignorant and the wicked to remain unmoved in their iniquity, provoking God, by persevering in their unrighteousness and filthiness, to give them up to a reprobate mind! Far be it from the righteous and the holy, not to continue steadfast in the service of Christ; seeing how soon He comes, and his reward with Him, "to give to every man according as his work shall be!"

He repeats it that He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." See ch. 1. 11. Let us repeat our resolution, that whatsoever we have to do, shall be begun, continued, and ended in Him. He renews his assurance of the blessedness which awaits them that do his commandments, reminding us of their right to the tree of life, and of their free access to the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us again and again resolve, and strive, and pray, that we may both know his will, and love to do it, both keep his commandments, and not count them grievous. He renews his warning, that there must be some shut out from the brightness of his presence in his holy city. Let us again and again enliven our abhorrence of sin. Let us watch continually and strive manfully, against such sins as are here mentioned, the presumption of dogs, the devilish arts of sorcerers, fornication, murder, idolatry, and both the uttering a lie, and the taking pleasure in falsehood.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." Lord, keep us always in the bosom of thy church, make us always glad to receive thy testimony! "I am the root and the offspring of David." Make us sensible, we pray Thee, that though Thou art David's Son, it was yet meet that he should call Thee, Lord! See Ps. 110. 1. "And the bright and morning star." Make us reflect, whenever we see that light in heaven, how it is Thou that bringest the day into our souls! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Let us listen when the Spirit speaks. Let us join with the bride in saying what the Spirit says. Thanks be to Thee, that we hear thy word! Let it lead us to long for thy presence. Let it make us thirst for the river of the water of life. Thanks be to Thee, that Thou hast invited us to take it freely.

And do Thou, merciful Saviour, who hast manifested thy concern for sinners, not less by thy timely warnings, than by thy precious promises, grant unto us, who have now heard "the words of the prophecy of this book," that we may never venture, either in thought, or word, or deed, to add unto, or take away from, that which Thou hast revealed. Never let us have to bear the dreadful plagues, which in this book are threatened. Never let us lose our part of the joy and glory, which in this book are surely promised. But "come," Thou faithful and true witness, "come," as Thou hast promised, "quickly." Come, ere we are overpowered by our enemy: come, ere we are betrayed by ourselves. "Amen," even as Thou hast promised; amen, even as we have prayed; amen, even before again we fall, before ever we once more transgress thy will, or walk unworthy of thy love; "even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The blessing at the end.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

§ 730. *Prayer for the grace of Christ.*

How edifying is ~~this~~ prayer of the apostle, in behalf of every one who should hear or read what he had written, that the grace of Jesus Christ may be with all! How well does it instruct us that without this grace we hear and read in vain! This book itself, yea this whole volume, is the gift of God through Christ. And in his hands is the disposal of our hearts and minds, and the stewardship of that light from above, whereby alone we can understand his sayings, or long to partake of his glory. Yes, but for the grace of Christ, the things of God are foolishness unto us. Holiness is hateful in our eyes, and heaven itself unwelcome to our thoughts, except our blessed Lord first move us, by his Spirit, to discern his revelation spiritually. See 1 Cor. 2. 14. Let it then be our prayer that this grace be with us. Let it be our earnest supplication unto the Father, that He will be pleased to give us the gift of the Holy Ghost, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

O Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by thy Son hast revealed unto us, in this book, some things which have already been fulfilled, and some which are yet for to come, enlighten our minds to apply what Thou hast taught us, to our great and endless comfort. In the past let us see the proof of thy marvellous foreknowledge. In the future let us look to see it made further manifest. For the present, let us abhor those corruptions of thy truth, those abuses so wide spread over thy church, which Thou hast here pointed out to our abhorrence. And let us maintain that purity and stedfastness of faith, that singleness of devotion, that warmth of love, which Thou hast here held up to our regard. Help us by thy grace, for otherwise we perish, help us to escape the wrath to come. Help us, for thy dear Son's sake, for we deserve no good thing ourselves, help us to obtain the glory that shall be revealed. Help us to overcome, to continue faithful unto death. And give us, at our departure from this transitory world, the gracious gift of life eternal, to the honour and glory of thy Son our Lord; to whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all praise in all the churches, henceforth, for ever and ever. "Amen."

POSTSCRIPT.

In concluding this Commentary on the New Testament, the writer may perhaps do some service to those who are engaged in the same studies, by here stating the opinions he has formed, as to the character and value of kindred works, which he has chiefly found occasion to consult, and for which he desires at the same time to express his thankfulness to the Giver of all good gifts.

The Homilies of Chrysostom are rich in matter, and most impressive in style. They abound in illustrations and applications, which for the most part do not appear to have yet found their way into the stream of English Theology.

Poole's Synopsis and Bloomfield's Synopsis contain valuable collections of the most approved comments, from abroad as well as from our own country, up to the date of their respective publications. Bloomfield's Greek Testament with English notes, is as eminently distinguished by correctness of judgment, as his former work is for depth of research. Of all the commentators referred to by Poole, Calvin and Grotius best deserve a distinct perusal.

Baxter's work on the New Testament, like most of his practical divinity, is plain, forcible, and improving. Henry has a great deal to say on every passage, and says it effectively. For fervour of devotion, as well as for fertility of invention, he is greatly to be valued. But his applications are often forced, his notions sometimes mean, and his language not only plain but homely. Hammond gives us the result of laborious study. Burkitt, though scarcely more than a compiler, has produced a book better fitted for family reading, in point of style and method, than any of its predecessors.

Patrick, Whitby, and Lowth, have been only occasionally consulted.

The chief excellency of Scott lies in his enforcing faithfully those doctrines of the Gospel, which had been for some time previously neglected. It may be thought, however, that he has a little tinged them with the spirit of party; and that he insists on them somewhat more frequently, than the texts bear him out, and therefore in a different proportion to that which is assigned to them in the word of God. He is also apt to write as if he knew more than Scripture tells us concerning God's decrees.

Doddridge has been usually overrated. And he wrote under circumstances which must have greatly tempted him to overrate himself. But he has done good service for many years; and he has many striking thoughts, though somewhat affectedly expressed.

Macknight on the Epistles abounds in repetition of matter, which is seldom original, though oftentimes curious and instructive.

It is to be regretted that the Family Bible edited by Mant and D'Oyley so often notices sceptical objections, which but for this publication would be never known to very many of its readers. It contains much to inform the mind; but not so much, in proportion, to enlighten the conscience, or to warm the heart.

Boys' Exposition deserves more success than it appears to have obtained. For perspicuity of expression, and power of application it will often bear comparison with the best. It is however rather a series of short sermons on detached texts, than a continuous commentary.

Quesnel has more of the spirit of Chrysostom than almost any of the moderns. And there is an English translation, in which the Romish errors are blotted out.

In some parts of this work, additional assistance has been derived from books of Scripture. And on the Book of Revelation in particular, such not always found, in the treatises of Woodhouse, Newton, Bowdler, Gaur, and many others. They are mentioned in the order in which they were.

The learned works of Hartwell Horne on the Scripture generally, of G. Townsend on their Arrangement, and of E. Greswell on the Harmony and Parables, have afforded continual assistance.

The Bishop of Chester's Exposition is probably well known and highly valued by most of the readers of this book; being in like manner adapted to the purpose of family reading.

Besides the aid derived from these and other publications, the writer has to acknowledge how particularly he is indebted to the private assistance of a friend, who not long since was also a fellowlabourer in this parish; whose faithfulness and skill have largely helped throughout the work, not only in correcting the errors of the press, but in amending the defects of the matter printed. But as he has never published, and therefore cannot be generally consulted, he may be indulged in the suppression of his name. For he is one who in all he does, desires earnestly to join in this words with which the work is now concluded: To God be all the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

